nemo
the classic comics library

No. 29

$3.95 ($5.95 in Canada)

A COMPLETE EPISODE OF THE 1930s CLASSIC MING FOO

FLIGHTS OF FANCY:
GASOLINE ALLEY'S ASTOUNDING SUNDAY PAGES

AND: AN INTERVIEW WITH MOON MULLINS' FERD JOHNSON

EDITORIAL:

RESOLVED!

Where have you been? Did my subscription lapse? Is *NEMO* dead? Did you finally run out of old comics?

Thus have the questions run over the past months at, gratifyingly, increased rather than diminished pace. Actually, we've been receiving more letters to the editor during the *de facto* hiatus. It would've been nice to receive such a volume during any given period about comics historiography, but I'm certainly not complaining.

NEMO's publisher, Fantagraphics Books, has had production problems recently, not in the least relieved by plans for another move of headquarters and factory. Work has gone slow apace on related projects as well; viz. *The Complete Segar Popeye* and *The Complete Little Orphan Annie*. A book called *Daydreams and Nightmares: The Fantastic Art of Winsor McCay* hit the stands after 2½ years in production, and somewhere down the road is another *NEMO*-generated book collecting *Red Barry* Sunday episodes. Suddenly the delay between *NEMO* Magazine's issues 28 and 29 doesn't seem so interminable.

But it *has* been, really, and our apologies to all whom another generation of editorial writers used to call Gentle Readers. We seem to be back on track, and we pledge to stay so with all the determination, or at least the formality, of Buster Brown's classic Resolutions.

The other side of the coin of this realm concerns distractions on my part. I have just completed work on a project that I thought would be relatively easy but proved gargantuan, a coffee-table volume for Abbeville Press entitled *America's Great Comic-Strip Artists*. It's supposed to receive a major push, and of course is a subject close to my heart, but I never gauged the project's appetite for time and attention until I was well into it. I hope it shows; it will be out Christmas of 1989.

Another project in which I have been immersed is a book called *Cousins*. It is about Jerry Lee Lewis, Jimmy Swaggart, and Mickey Gilley, all first cousins, all born within a year of each other, all grown up together like brothers, and all gone on in different directions . . . or rather similar directions in superficially different ways. I have been working on the book since before the Swaggart scandal (which has given it new interest) and have been frequently on the road and quite busy. It may seem like an out-of-the-ordinary topic to those who know me through *NEMO*, but is in line with books I have written on, among other subjects, television history and country-western music.

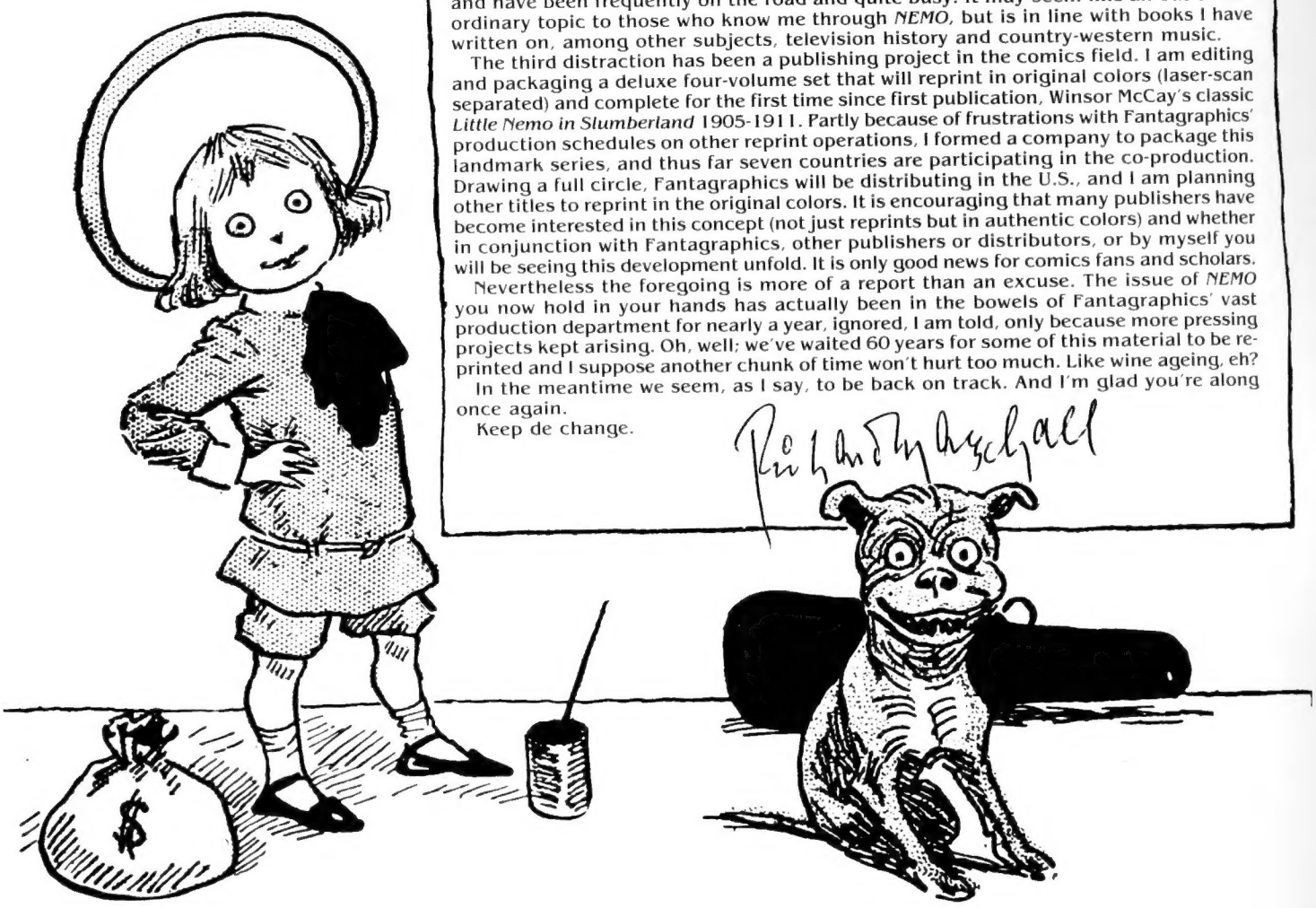
The third distraction has been a publishing project in the comics field. I am editing and packaging a deluxe four-volume set that will reprint in original colors (laser-scan separated) and complete for the first time since first publication, Winsor McCay's classic *Little Nemo in Slumberland* 1905-1911. Partly because of frustrations with Fantagraphics' production schedules on other reprint operations, I formed a company to package this landmark series, and thus far seven countries are participating in the co-production. Drawing a full circle, Fantagraphics will be distributing in the U.S., and I am planning other titles to reprint in the original colors. It is encouraging that many publishers have become interested in this concept (not just reprints but in authentic colors) and whether in conjunction with Fantagraphics, other publishers or distributors, or by myself you will be seeing this development unfold. It is only good news for comics fans and scholars.

Nevertheless the foregoing is more of a report than an excuse. The issue of *NEMO* you now hold in your hands has actually been in the bowels of Fantagraphics' vast production department for nearly a year, ignored, I am told, only because more pressing projects kept arising. Oh, well; we've waited 60 years for some of this material to be reprinted and I suppose another chunk of time won't hurt too much. Like wine ageing, eh?

In the meantime we seem, as I say, to be back on track. And I'm glad you're along once again.

Keep de change.

Richard Merkel



FEB., 1989
ISSUE #29
COVER: Frank King

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Fantasy in the Comics 5
Gasoline Alley could be all things to all readers: a middle-class strip (the Great American Novel in truth); a view of life through children's eyes; a visual *tour de force*, especially in the Sundays; fantasy of the first rank. At any time it was one of these things; sometimes it was all of these things. . . and those pages by Frank King are the type featured in this issue's portfolio. Join Uncle Walt and Skeezix as they fly.

Moonshine Still 18
The year was 1924. One of the all-time great comic strips was born—*Moon Mullins* by Frank Willard—and so was the career of cartoonist Ferd Johnson, who signed on as assistant. Through the years he helped conceive the inspired characters and madcap humorous continuities, and today he continues on *Moon*, 30 years after Willard's death. Johnson created his own classic strips; he is an accomplished painter (once instructed by Norman Rockwell); and brought along his talented son Tom to a place of prominence in the industry. Read an exclusive *Nemo* interview with Ferd, conducted by Rick Marschall and Gary Groth.

One From Column A 45
There was a time in the 1930s when it seemed like every adventure comic—from *Terry and the Pirates* to *The Gumps*—had to have its Oriental sidekick spouting fortune-cookie wisdom. One strip featured such a character as its star. A forgotten gem with interesting storylines and great art was *Ming Foo*, written by Brandon Walsh and drawn by Nicholas Afonsky. This issue presents a full episode of the Sunday Classic.

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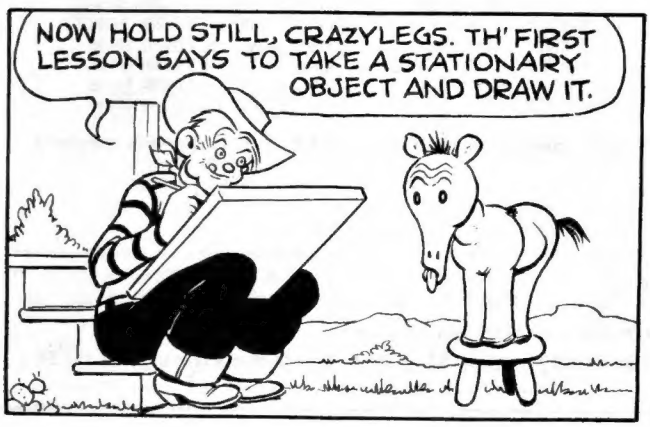

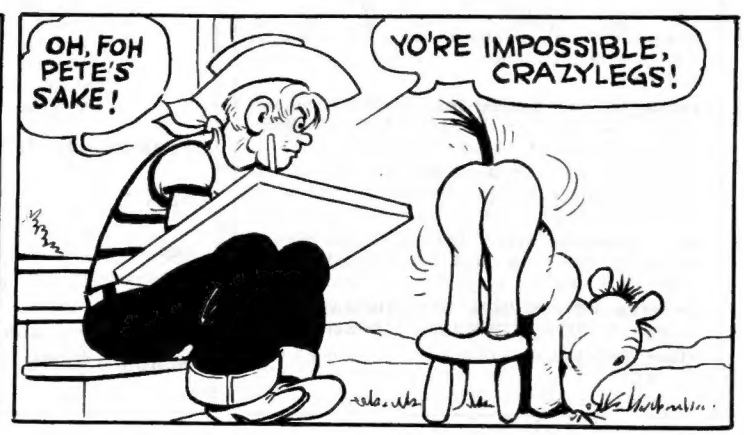

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THE NEMO BOOKSHELF

Although some of the earlier issues of **NEMO: The Classic Comics Library** are sold out, we can still offer the discriminating comics connoisseur a superb collection of most issues of the finest magazine devoted to classic comics:

2 Exclusive material on the birth of *Superman*, including the never-before-seen original Siegel/Shuster fanzine version. Also: *Terry and the Pirates* Concludes, Fred Harman, Art Young.

7 Special Carl Barks issue, with six pages of full-color Barks work! Also, an interview with the Duck Man; rare animation art; Clare Briggs, *Smilin' Jack*, more.

8 *Little Orphan Annie* issue, including a complete reprint of a 1929 tale, an analysis of the series by Donald Phelps, and a biography of Harold Gray. Full-color Annie cover by Gray.

10 Christmas issue, with a portfolio of cartoonists' Christmas cards. Also, Gustave Verbeek's *Upside-Downs*, Mell (*Miss Peach*) Lazarus interviewed, Ray Ewer, and *Mutt and Jeff*.

11 Sam's Strip, by Walker and Browne, premieres; "Dwig's" cartoons; giant Charles Dana Gibson portfolio; James Montgomery Flagg remembered; and the forgotten antics of *Slim Jim*.

12 The cartoonists who fought World War II; Frank King's most fantstic strip; Jack Williamson and Lee Elias's *Beyond Mars* SF strip; and pen woman Rose O'Neill.

13 Big half-year sequence from Will Gould's classic, violent *Red Barry*; *Major Hoople*; a look back at TAD; and another installment of *Sam's Strip*.

15 A long sequence from Milton Caniff's *Dickie Dare* reprinted; *Tim Tyler's Luck*; *Hairbreadth Harry* continues; an extra-long "European Heroes" installment; plus reviews and letters.

16 A retrospective of the comic-strip adaptations of *Huckleberry Finn*; George Herriman's pre-Kat strip, *Baron Bean*; *Hairbreadth Harry* concludes; the art of Joseph Clement Coll.

18 *Li'l Abner*'s Al Capp is featured, with his final interview, a hilarious speech, and the complete 1955 "Bald Iggle" sequence. Also, the graphic art of Winsor McCay, and *Sam's Strip*.

19 A classic episode of *Kerry Drake*, Andriola's detective strip; with *Big Chief Wahoo* in Hollywood; the political art of Frank King; and Penman of the Past Russell Patterson.

20 Gustave Veerbeck's classic *Terrors of the Tiny Tads*; R.B. Fuller's adventurous *Oaky Doaks*; *Sam's Strip*; letters; and a special pictorial spread on strip promotion art. Cover by Alex Raymond.

21 A big helping of Jack Kent's classic *King Aroo*; a look at Percy Crosby's paintings of slum kids; and a complete '40s episode of Harold Gray's little-known Western series, *Little Joe*.

22 A special collection of features on Jimmy Swinnerton, including a portfolio of rare work; plus *Joe Palooka*, the cartoons of John Held, Jr., and political cartoonists and the labor disputes.

23 A complete episode of *Little Orphan Annie* from 1937; a look back at *Hi and Lois*; Fontaine Fox's assistant talks about working on *Toonerville Trolley*; and the labor disputes.

24 A special all-Rube Goldberg issue, including a long article on his work, two first-person piece by Rube, a complete checklist, portfolios of *Boob McNutt* Sunday pages and classic "inventions."

25 Edwina interviewed, with an episode of her *Cap Stubbs and Tipple*; Gene Ahern's earliest work; Milton Caniff in adland; and John Wheeler's reminiscences of Bud Fisher, TAD, and others.

26 A generous portfolio of T.S. Sullivant's animals. Cartooning contests recalled; *Henry*; and rare examples of *Everett True*.

27 Norman Rockwell's early (and rare) cartoons and humor-magazine work; the classic Western strip *White Boy*; William Faulkner's cartoons; yesteryear's cartoons about the . . . budget surplus?

28 Ethnicity in the comics, with articles on racial attitudes in the comics, Jews in comics, blacks in comics, and a 22-page ethnic images portfolio. Also: Milt Gross' *Nize Baby*.

Subscriptions to **NEMO: The Classic Comics Library** are available. Support **Nemo**, and you support the history of the comics medium and all its treasures.

Also available are Volumes 2-4 of **The Complete E.C. Segar Popeye** (Sundays); Volumes 5-8, (dailies); seven volumes of Hal Foster's **Prince Valiant**, printed in a large full-color format; two volumes of *Little Orphan Annie* by Harold Gray; **Daydreams and Nightmares**, a collection of Winsor McCay work; and the complete **Dickie Dare** by Milton Caniff.

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GASOLINE ALLEY'S FLIGHTS OF FANCY

One of the most consistent masterpieces of comic art in America was the Sunday *Gasoline Alley* by Frank King.

For years cartoonist Frank King used his Sunday page as a unified design statement featuring fantasy elements, bold colors, homespun philosophy, the reflections of childhood, middle-class comedy and melodrama (more light comedy in the Sundays), and astonishing artwork. As a designer and conceptualist—as a cartoonist—King frequently presented one huge drawing sliced into small panels, with characters walking through the component parts of the larger image. No one before or since was more playful, respectful, or innovative with his Sunday forum—including George Herriman.

Through the years King featured several specialties and running themes. For instance, readers looked forward to Uncle Walt's annual autumnal walks through countryside and brilliantly colored foliage with young Skeezix, and later Judy. Famous still are the pages wherein characters examine modern art, or old woodcuts, or circles drawn with a compass . . . and the characters' physical world becomes that of the subjects.

The pages in the following portfolio reflect the best of another recurring theme: fantasy pages involving imaginative flight. It is a testament not just to Frank King's genius but to the elasticity of the art form that a strip that was basically an ongoing chronicle of Midwest, middle-class, middle America, with a few laughs and tears but mostly chuckles and sighs, could scale the heights of almost surrealistic fantasy . . . and just as facilely.

Frank King showed that flying carpets were not just of Arabian nights, but also could be of American Sunday mornings.

—REM

GASOLINE ALLEY
IF THE ALARM WOULD ONLY RING!
© 1922 BY CHICAGO TRIBUNE
NOW FOR PETE'S SAKE, SKEEZIX, GO TO SLEEP! IT'S ONLY AN HOUR TO DAYLIGHT AND THEN YOU CAN PLAY ALL YOU WANT TO!
I ONLY HOPE MY BRAKES HOLD — THAT'S ALL!
HONEST, OFFICER, I WASN'T DOING MORE THAN 15 MILES AN HOUR!
O, IT'S YOU IS IT SKEEZIX! GET IN HERE. I THINK IT'S GOING TO RAIN!
BEG YOUR PARDON, BUT HOW CAN WE GET OUT OF THESE WOODS? WE'RE STRANGERS HERE
WE'VE GOT TO KEEP OUR EYES OPEN, SKEEZIX! THIS LOOKS LIKE ANOTHER RIP VAN WINKLE GAME!
WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THAT? WE CAN'T LOSE 'EM! KEEP YOUR FEET UP — THIS SMELLS LIKE GASOLINE!
THIS IS ABSOLUTELY THE WORST DETOUR I EVER TRAVELED!
I'M GLAD I HAVEN'T THE CAR ALONG!
BELIEVE ME, I'LL NEVER COME THIS WAY AGAIN!
GEE, SKEEZIX, I HAD AN AWFUL NIGHTMARE — DID YOU?

February 26, 1922

Gasoline Alley
SEE THAT FUNNY LOOKING THING? THAT'S THE EARTH!
KING
CAREFUL, SKEEZIX. YOU'LL BUMP IF YOU FALL OFF THE EDGE! THE IDEA OF STAIRS LIKE THIS WITHOUT RAILINGS!
CAN YOU BEAT IT! THE SERVICE IS SOMETHING AWFUL!
WHAT'S THE MATTER? THREE CARS SCOOTED PAST AND DIDN'T STOP. I'VE RUNG A DOZEN TIMES.
MONDAY COME'S AFTER TUESDAY UP HERE.
LET ME OFF! I THOUGHT WE WERE GOING UP.
UMBRELLAS ARE MORE EXPENSIVE WHEN IT RAINS.
STOP AT KEWANEE, WANAKEE AND KEWENAW.
ANYWAY, FINGERS WERE MADE BEFORE FORKS.
NO
YES
YES
NO
I ALMOST FORGOT—IT'S SATURDAY NIGHT!
ANYWAY, A STITCH IN TIME SAVES NINE. BUT IT CAN'T BE HELPED.
INSOMNIA
AND BESIDES WE SHOULD BE GETTING BACK. I LEFT THE HOT WATER TURNED ON.
HOWEVER, THE NIGHT SHIFT COMES ON AT SIX O'CLOCK.
THE BISCUIT THROWER
NEVER MIND, SKEEZIX — A PENNY SAVED IS A PENNY EARNED.
OH! SO THAT'S WHERE THE STORM IS COMING FROM!
WELL, I DO BELIEVE THE WINDOW'S OPEN!

March 11, 1923

HANG ON SKEEZIX. WE MAY STRIKE AN AIR POCKET!
GASOLINE ALLEY
NO SIR, SKEEZIX. THERE'S NOTHING LIKE TRAVEL TO BROADEN THE MIND.
WE PER NEAR TO MOON, UNCA WALT?
NEW SIGHTS AND NEW SCENES KEEP ONE YOUNG AND ALERT.
PAL SHOWEM WHERE TO GO!
THERE ARE ALWAYS NEW LANDS TO EXPLORE AND FRESH BEAUTIES TO GREET THE EYE
HOLDEM TIGHT, PAL!
OCCASIONAL DIFFICULTIES ONLY ADD ZEST AND INTEREST TO THE TRIP.
MOVE LEISURELY, SEE THINGS AS YOU GO, IS MY MOTTO.
AGREEABLE COMPANIONS ARE HALF THE JOYS OF WANDERING IN STRANGE PARTS. OLD FRIENDS IN NEW PLACES, AS IT WERE.
AND WHATEVER THE MODE OF TRAVEL, THE PLEASURE MORE THAN MAKES UP FOR THE DISCOMFORT.
STOPPING PLACES SHOULD BE CHOSEN FOR COMFORT INSTEAD OF CLASS.
SLIDE SOME MORE, UNCA WALT!
AND GETTING BACK AGAIN IS ALWAYS ONE OF THE THRILLS OF THE JOURNEY!
CLOUDS ARE HANGING LOW SIGN OF UNSETTLED WEATHER.
WELL, OF ALL THINGS! IT'S RAINING!
SKEEX GOT PRINKLER TOO!
SKEEX WATAH UNCA WALT. MAKEM GROW!

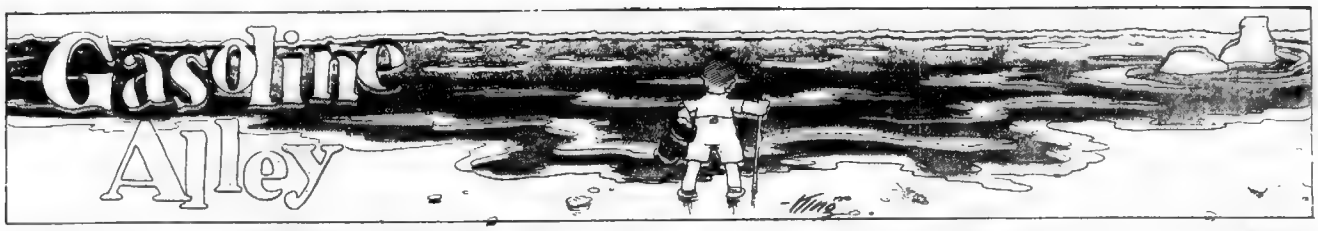
August 12, 1923

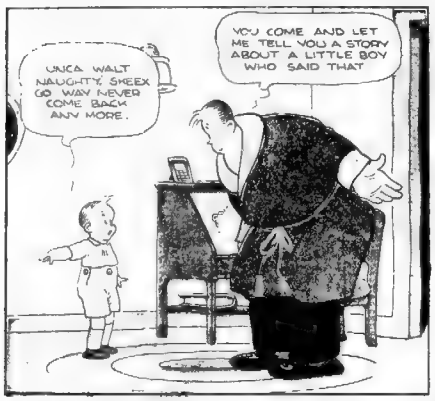
Gasoline Alley
Christmas Carols
WHAT? ARE YOU AWAKE, SKEEZIX? UNCA WALT IS SOUND ASLEEP! I'VE JUST LEFT YOU MY LAST TOYS AND MUST GO BACK FOR MORE. WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO ALONG?
SURE, SKEEX GO TOO!
YOU JUST HOP INTO THIS LITTLE ESQUIMO SUIT BECAUSE IT'S SORT OF CHILLY OUT.
UNCA WALT SOUN ASEEP.
YOU SEE THERE ARE SO MANY MORE CHILDREN THAN EVER BEFORE. I HAD TO GET A LOT OF OUTSIDE HELP TO MAKE TOYS AND DOLLS AND CANDY THIS YEAR.
AND NOW I'M GOING TO LET YOU IN ON A LITTLE SECRET. YOU'VE WATCHED THE STARS, OF COURSE. DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY REALLY ARE?
WE GO SEE!
YOU CAN BEGIN TO SEE THAT THEY ARE THE LITTLE SKY GNOMES' WINDOWS SHINING IN THE DARKNESS.
SKEEX DRIVE, SANTY CAWS!
HERE WE ARE, OL' TOP. WE'LL GET OUT AND STRETCH OUR LEGS WHILE WE GET OUR SLEIGH LOADED UP AGAIN.
HELLO, FOLKS! THESE, SKEEZIX, ARE THE SKY PEOPLE. THEY HAVE BEEN WORKING HARD FOR ME ALMOST EVERY NIGHT. HAVEN'T YOU SEEN THEIR WINDOWS?
YES SIR. THESE SKY FAIRIES WORK LIKE BEAVERS AND HAVE THOUSANDS OF TOYS MADE AND PACKED READY FOR ME TO TAKE TO OTHER BOYS AND GIRLS.
SKEEX HELP 'EM!
NOW HOLD YOUR HAT WHILE WE GO INTO A SPIRAL NOSE DIVE - THAT'S THE QUICKEST WAY TO GET BACK TO EARTH.
THE LITTLE FELLOW WAS HAVING A FINE TIME. BUT HE WAS SO TIRED HE JUST HAD TO DROP OFF TO SLEEP.
WHERE SANTY CAWS?
OH UNCA WALT! SANTY CAWS COME AN TOOK SKEEX WAY UP IN A SKY ANA SKY FAIRIES FILL UP SANTY CAWS SLED ANA REINDEER PULLEM AN THEY AINT STARS AT ALL - IT'S WINDOWS!
YOU DON'T SAY!

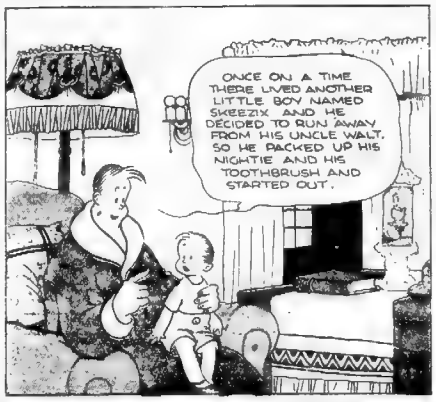
December 23, 1923

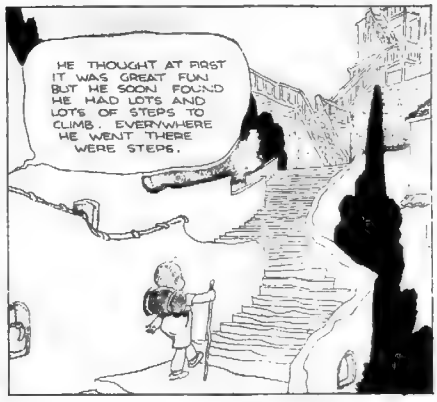
Gasoline Alley
COME BLITZEN, NICE BLITZEN
SKEEZIX! YOU LITTLE RASCAL! I THOUGHT YOU WERE IN BED SOUND ASLEEP!
SANTY CLAUS, GIVE SKEEX A RIDE ONA REINDEER?
SIT DOWN, HONEY. I DIDN'T BRING DONNER AND BLITZEN AND THE OTHER REINDEER THIS TIME. I HAVE OTHER WAYS OF GETTING ABOUT. YOU KNOW.
SKEEX GO WITH SANTY CLAUS?
THIS ISN'T ANY NEW IDEA. IT WAS USED BEFORE I HAD ANY REINDEER — EVEN BEFORE I WAS BORN
RIDE ONA RUG!
YES, AND IT'S ALWAYS A HANDY WAY TO GET BACK HOME AFTER I'VE BEEN AWAY.
RUG SAILS JES' LIKE A AIRPLANE.
IT'S A MAGIC CARPET. GOES UP, DOWN, ANYWHERE I WANT IT TO, AND YOU DON'T EVEN GET COLD WHEN YOU RIDE ON IT.
MAKE IT GO HIGHER.
OO! RIGHT OVER A MOUNTAINS!
YES, THERE'S SNOW AND ICE HERE TOO. BUT NOT EVERYWHERE, EVEN AT CHRISTMAS TIME.
OUR CARPET, YOU SEE, TRAVELS AS WELL OVER THE SEA AS OVER THE LAND. AND MUCH FASTER THAN ANY SHIP
LOTTA CUTE LITTA BOATS.
NO SNOW HERE, SKEEZIX. ONLY SUNSHINE AND PALMS. HERE'S WHERE THE MAGIC CARPET FIRST CAME FROM
AND HERE IS WHERE IT IS RIGHT AT HOME — OVER THE DESERT. IT DOESN'T LOOK MUCH LIKE CHRISTMAS HERE, DOES IT?
SEE A TINY CAMELS, SANTY CLAUS.
JUST FOR A CHANGE WE'LL WANDER UP THROUGH THE ICEBERGS. DO YOU LIKE TO TRAVEL WITH SANTY?
SURE
NOW WE'LL BE GOING OVER THE BIGGEST FOREST OF CHRISTMAS TREES IN THE WORLD. YOU'D BETTER TAKE A LITTLE NAP BEFORE WE GET TO MY PALACE. IT'S RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF IT
WELL, THE LITTLE FELLOW HAS FALLEN SOUND ASLEEP WHILE I'VE BEEN TELLING HIM ARABIAN NIGHTS STORIES AND HE WAS GOING TO WAIT FOR SANTA CLAUS!

December 21, 1924

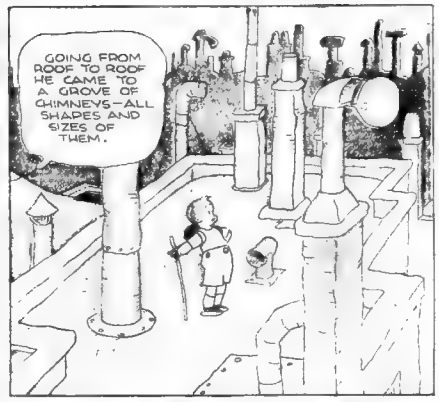


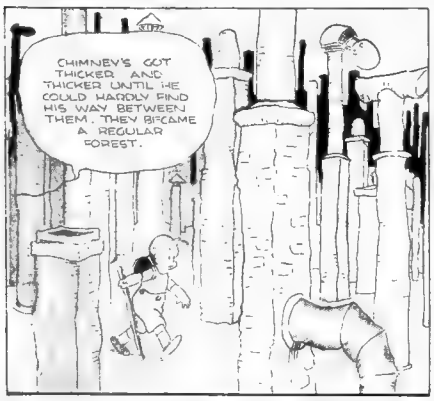


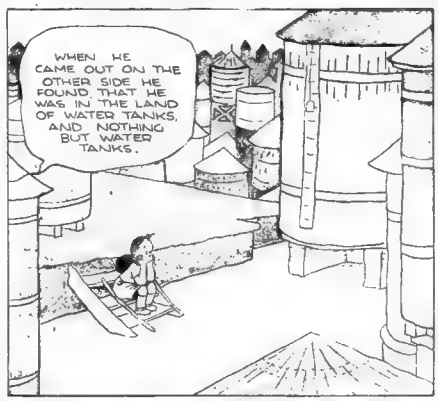

ONCE ON A TIME THERE LIVED ANOTHER LITTLE BOY NAMED SKEEZIX AND HE DECIDED TO RUN AWAY FROM HIS UNCLE WALT. SO HE PACKED UP HIS NIGHTIE AND HIS TOOTHBRUSH AND STARTED OUT.

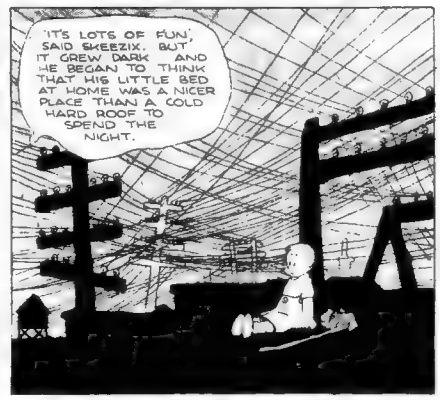

HE THOUGHT AT FIRST IT WAS GREAT FUN BUT HE SOON FOUND HE HAD LOTS AND LOTS OF STEPS TO CLIMB. EVERYWHERE HE WENT THERE WERE STEPS.

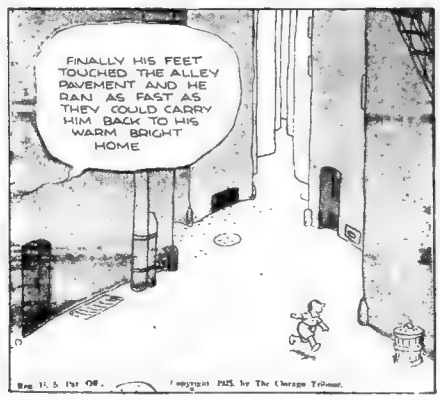
AFTER MORE CLIMBING OF STEPS HE FOUND HIMSELF ON A ROOF AND ROOFS WERE ALL HE COULD SEE IN ANY DIRECTION, AND EVERY KIND HE COULD IMAGINE.








'IT'S LOTS OF FUN,' SAID SKEEZIX. BUT IT GREW DARK AND HE BEGAN TO THINK THAT HIS LITTLE BED AT HOME WAS A NICER PLACE THAN A COLD HARD ROOF TO SPEND THE NIGHT.

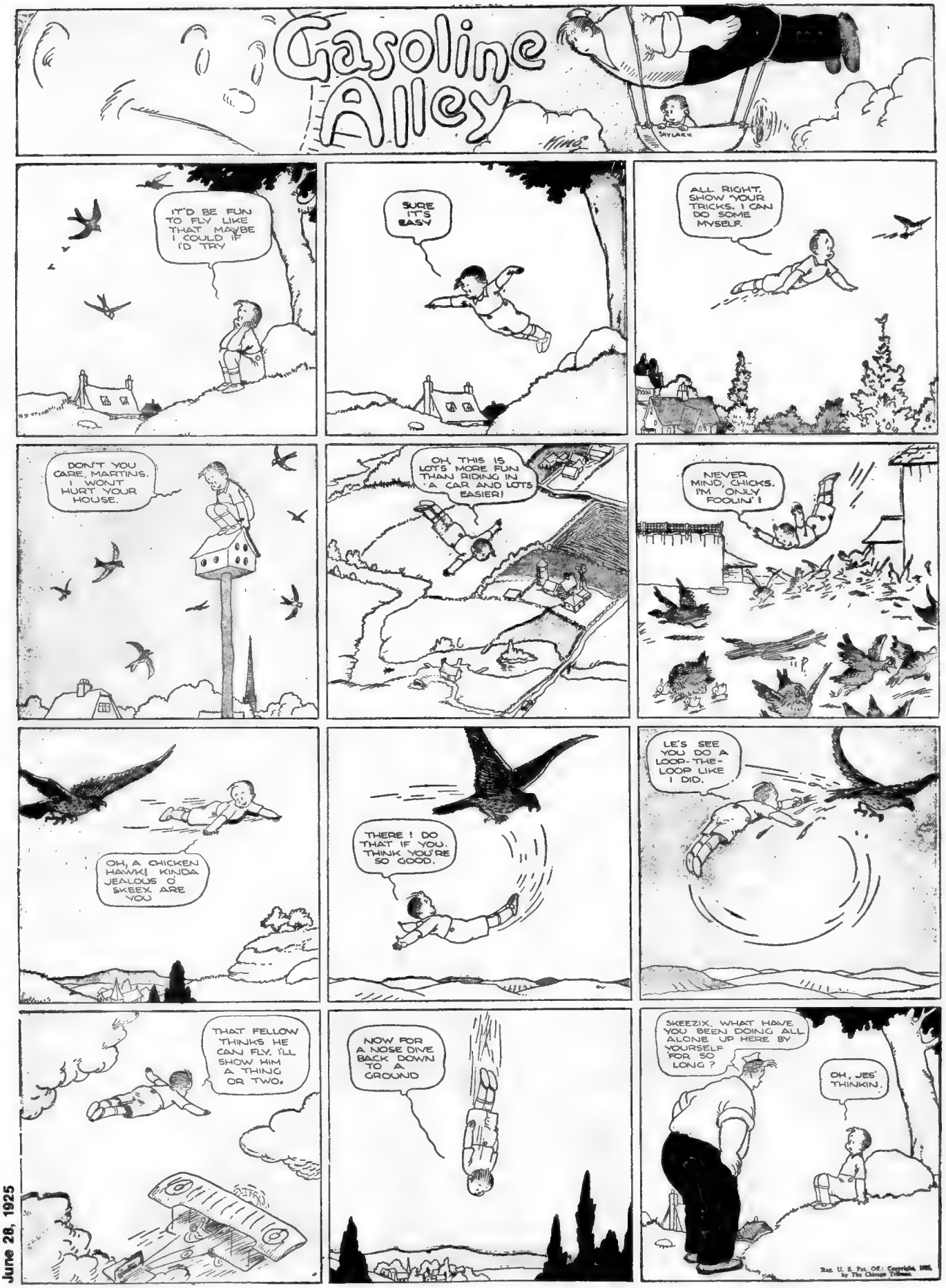

FINALLY HIS FEET TOUCHED THE ALLEY PAVEMENT AND HE RAN AS FAST AS THEY COULD CARRY HIM BACK TO HIS WARM BRIGHT HOME
Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.
Copyright 1925, by The Chicago Tribune.

AND UNCLE WALT TUCKED HIM IN BED IN AN OCEAN OF PILLOWS AND HE WAS GLAD HE WASN'T ON A DARK COLD ROOF.
THIS SKEEZ NEVER GO WAY FROM UNCA WALT ANY MORE!

February 1, 1925

GASOLINE ALLEY
COME, JEAN, YOU AN' I GO WAY AWAY INTO A BIG WOODS AN FIND FAIRY CASTLE.
YOU KNOW THE WAY, SKEEZIX?
WE GO 'CROSS CREEK — FIND A FAIRY CASTLE.
ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO CROSS? THIS IS THE ENCHANTED BROOK AND EVERYTHING ON THE OTHER SIDE IS ENCHANTED TOO.
AREN'T YOU 'FRAID, SKEEZIX?
'FRAID? THERE AIN'T ANYTHING TO BE 'FRAID OF IN A WOODS.
SEE, SKEEZIX, TREE MAN TALK TO US!
HE SAY HE TAKE US TO FOOT OF A MOUNTAIN.
GEE, THIS IS A SWELL WAY TO RIDE!
I NEVER KNEW A TREE COULD RUN SO FAST.
HE'S GOING AWAY AGAIN! I WONDER WHY?
AN' I WONDER WHY HE LEFT US HERE?
OO, LOOK!
I SEE LAND WAY OVER THERE.
ANYWAY WE'RE GETTING SOMEWHERE!
NEVER MIND, JEAN. I CAN SWIM.
YOU LITTLE DICKENS! WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY FALLING ASLEEP WHILE I'M TELLING YOU A FAIRY STORY!

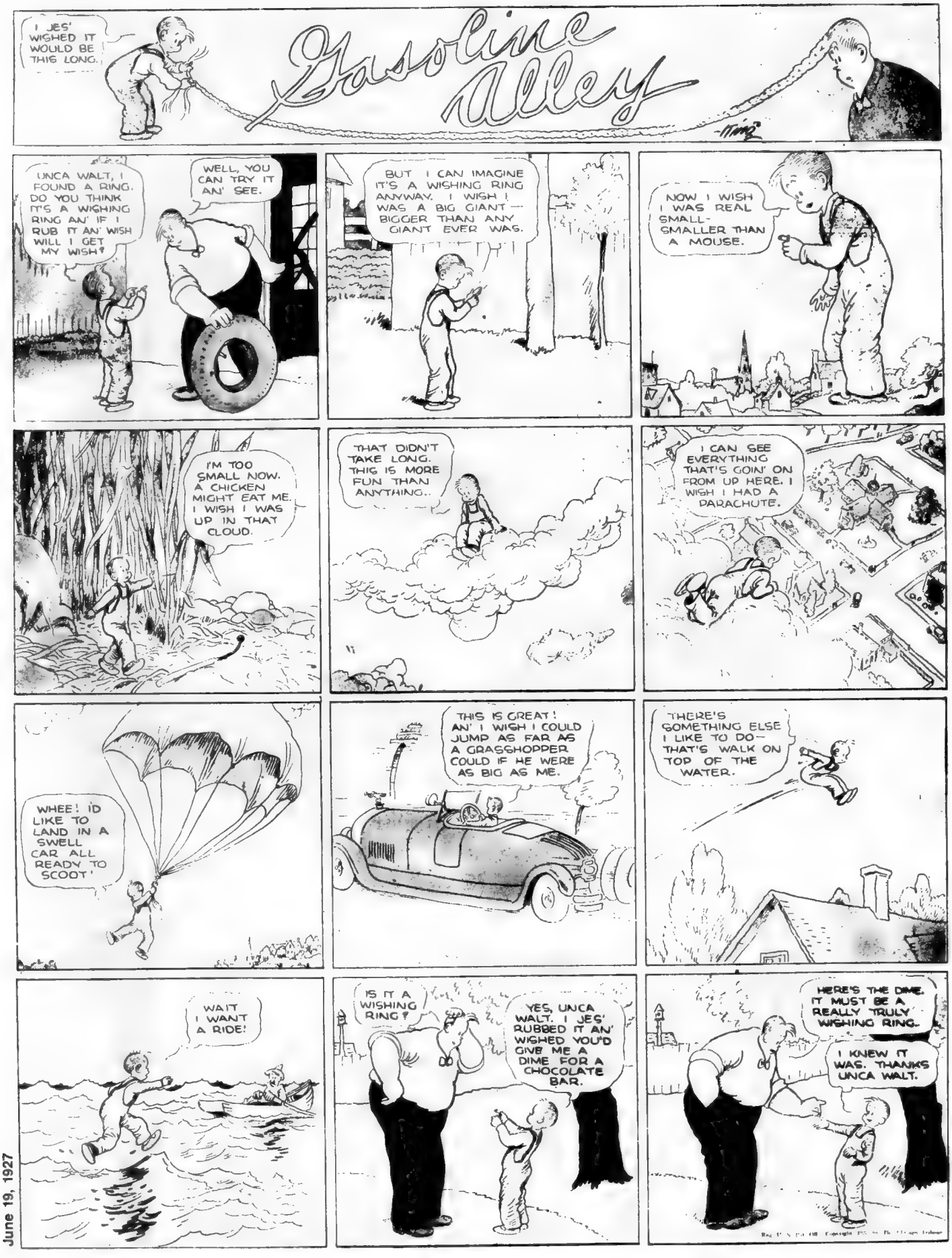
April 26, 1925


Gasoline Alley
SKYLARK
IT'D BE FUN TO FLY LIKE THAT MAYBE I COULD IF I'D TRY
SURE IT'S EASY
ALL RIGHT, SHOW YOUR TRICKS. I CAN DO SOME MYSELF.
DON'T YOU CARE, MARTINS. I WON'T HURT YOUR HOUSE.
OH, THIS IS LOTS MORE FUN THAN RIDING IN A CAR AND LOTS EASIER!
NEVER MIND, CHICKS, I'M ONLY FOOLIN'!
OH, A CHICKEN HAWK! KINDA JEALOUS O' SKEEX ARE YOU
THERE! DO THAT IF YOU THINK YOU'RE SO GOOD.
LE'S SEE YOU DO A LOOP-THE-LOOP LIKE I DID.
THAT FELLOW THINKS HE CAN FLY. I'LL SHOW HIM A THING OR TWO.
NOW FOR A NOSE DIVE BACK DOWN TO A GROUND
SKEEZIX, WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING ALL ALONE UP HERE BY YOURSELF FOR SO LONG?
OH, JES' THINKIN.
Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.; Copyright, 1925, by The Chicago Tribune

June 28, 1925

Gasoline Alley
IT'S CLOUDS AN' A SNOWSTORM AN' I'VE BEEN FLOATING AROUND IN IT FOR HOURS. I HAVEN'T SEEN ANYBODY OR ANYTHING.
HERE COMES SOMEBODY! HEY! WHERE ARE WE? WHICH WAY IS HOME?
I GUESS, PARTNER, WE'D BETTER TRAVEL TOGETHER. I DON'T HAVE ANY IDEA WHERE WE ARE. I'LL INTRODUCE MYSELF. MY NAME IS SANTA CLAUS
ISN'T THAT FUNNY - I KNEW YOU WERE SANTY CLAUS ALL THE TIME. I'M SKEEZIX.
I GOT SEPARATED FROM MY SLEIGH AND REINDEER IN THE FOG. WAIT. HERE'S A HOLE IN THE CLOUDS. MAYBE I CAN TELL WHERE WE ARE.
GREAT GUNS! IT'S DAYLIGHT AND IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE NIGHT. WE HAVE DRIFTED A LONG WAYS. WE ARE OVER CHINA.
CAN WE GET DOWN SANTY CLAUS?
NO, I THINK WE'LL START FOR HOME. I HAVE A BIG NIGHT'S WORK AHEAD OF ME IN AMERICA. THIS IS RUSSIA AND WE'LL SAIL RIGHT OVER IT.
DON'T LET ME FALL. WILL YOU!
NOW WE'RE OVER PARIS BUT WE CAN'T STOP.
I WANT TO GO HOME.
WHERE IS THIS, SANTY CLAUS?
THIS IS LONDON, SKEEZIX, AND WE'LL BE HOME IN JUST ABOUT THREE SHAKES OF A LAMB'S TAIL.
WE'LL HOP THE ATLANTIC OCEAN ON A NON-STOP FLIGHT.
I'M NOT AFRAID NOW. CAN WE LOOP THE LOOP?
SOME OTHER TIME BUT NOT NOW. THERE I THAT BEGINS TO LOOK LIKE HOME.
PLEASE TAKE ME TO UNCA WALT.
NOW YOU DIVE RIGHT DOWN TO UNCLE WALT AND I'LL GO AND HUNT MY REINDEER. I'LL BE AROUND TO SEE YOU LATER.
DON'T FORGET WHERE I LIVE.
SKEEZIX, DON'T YOU THINK I'D BETTER PUT YOU IN YOUR BED? SANTA HASN'T COME YET AND YOU'VE BEEN ASLEEP.
I KNOW HE HASN'T COME BUT I HAVEN'T BEEN ASLEEP. I'VE BEEN WITH HIM ALL OVER THE WORLD. HE'S COMIN' LATER.

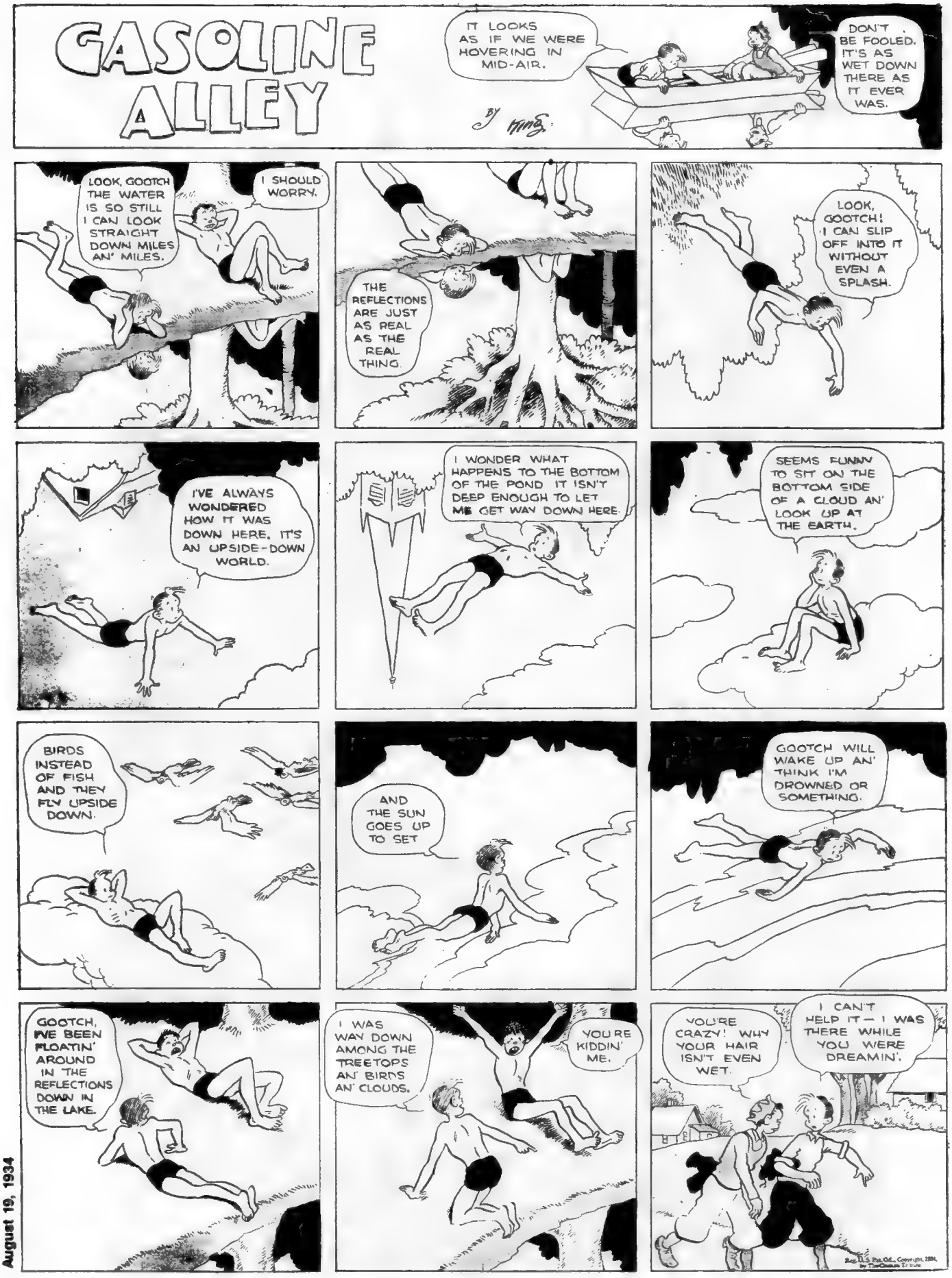
December 19, 1926


I JES' WISHED IT WOULD BE THIS LONG.
Gasoline Alley
UNCA WALT, I FOUND A RING. DO YOU THINK IT'S A WISHING RING AN' IF I RUB IT AN' WISH WILL I GET MY WISH?
WELL, YOU CAN TRY IT AN' SEE.
BUT I CAN IMAGINE IT'S A WISHING RING ANYWAY. I WISH I WAS A BIG GIANT — BIGGER THAN ANY GIANT EVER WAS.
NOW I WISH I WAS REAL SMALL- SMALLER THAN A MOUSE.
I'M TOO SMALL NOW. A CHICKEN MIGHT EAT ME. I WISH I WAS UP IN THAT CLOUD.
THAT DIDN'T TAKE LONG. THIS IS MORE FUN THAN ANYTHING..
I CAN SEE EVERYTHING THAT'S GOIN' ON FROM UP HERE. I WISH I HAD A PARACHUTE.
WHEE! I'D LIKE TO LAND IN A SWELL CAR ALL READY TO SCOOT'
THIS IS GREAT! AN' I WISH I COULD JUMP AS FAR AS A GRASSHOPPER COULD IF HE WERE AS BIG AS ME.
THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE I LIKE TO DO— THAT'S WALK ON TOP OF THE WATER.
WAIT I WANT A RIDE!
IS IT A WISHING RING?
YES, UNCA WALT. I JES' RUBBED IT AN' WISHED YOU'D GIVE ME A DIME FOR A CHOCOLATE BAR.
HERE'S THE DIME. IT MUST BE A REALLY TRULY WISHING RING.
I KNEW IT WAS. THANKS UNCA WALT.

June 19, 1927

THE AIR JUST ISN'T SAFE ANY MORE.
GASOLINE ALLEY
KING
HOW TIMES HAVE CHANGED! INSTEAD OF SHADOWY WITCHES RIDING THEIR BROOMSTICKS ABOUT IN THE DARKNESS, GREAT SHIPS OF WOOD AND METAL NOW PLY THEIR WAYS ACROSS THE HALLOWE'EN SKY.
THAT'S MY GOOD BROOM, SKEEZIX. YOU BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU DOES WITH IT.
I WON'T HURT IT, RACHEL. I'M JES' GOIN' TO TRY SOMETHIN'.
IF I CAN GET A GOOD TAKE-OFF THE REST OUGHT TO BE EASY.
MAYBE THEY DO HAVE A LOT O' AEROPLANES BUT A BROOMSTICK IS A LOT CHEAPER.
MAYBE THAT ONE CAN TRAVEL FASTER BUT HE ISN'T HAVING ANY MORE FUN.
AN' I CAN DO A LOT O' THINGS THAT CLUMSY BLIMP CAN'T.
BOY! I JUST GOT OUT OF THE WAY OF THAT ONE IN TIME!
THAT FELLOW WANTS A RACE. ALL RIGHT I'LL GIVE IT TO HIM.
HEY, YOU! WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE — LINDBERGH! PULL OVER TO THE SIDE OF THE AIR LANE.
?
I'M GIVIN YOU A TICKET FOR CUTTIN IN' AN' OUT OF TRAFFIC AN' FOR RUNNIN WITHOUT LIGHTS.
GEE, I DIDN'T KNOW BROOMSTICK RIDERS HAD TO CARRY LIGHTS TOO!
UNCLE WALT — SEE! THE AIR COP GAVE ME A TICKET.
TICKET? LOOKS TO ME LIKE AN AUTUMN LEAF.

October 26, 1930


GASOLINE ALLEY
BY KING
IT LOOKS AS IF WE WERE HOVERING IN MID-AIR.
DON'T BE FOOLED. IT'S AS WET DOWN THERE AS IT EVER WAS.
LOOK, GOOTCH THE WATER IS SO STILL I CAN LOOK STRAIGHT DOWN MILES AN' MILES.
I SHOULD WORRY.
THE REFLECTIONS ARE JUST AS REAL AS THE REAL THING.
LOOK, GOOTCH! I CAN SLIP OFF INTO IT WITHOUT EVEN A SPLASH.
I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED HOW IT WAS DOWN HERE. IT'S AN UPSIDE-DOWN WORLD.
I WONDER WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BOTTOM OF THE POND IT ISN'T DEEP ENOUGH TO LET ME GET WAY DOWN HERE.
SEEMS FUNNY TO SIT ON THE BOTTOM SIDE OF A CLOUD AN' LOOK UP AT THE EARTH.
BIRDS INSTEAD OF FISH AND THEY FLY UPSIDE DOWN.
AND THE SUN GOES UP TO SET
GOOTCH WILL WAKE UP AN' THINK I'M DROWNED OR SOMETHING.
GOOTCH, I'VE BEEN FLOATIN' AROUND IN THE REFLECTIONS DOWN IN THE LAKE.
I WAS WAY DOWN AMONG THE TREETOPS AN' BIRDS AN' CLOUDS.
YOU'RE KIDDIN' ME.
YOU'RE CRAZY! WHY YOUR HAIR ISN'T EVEN WET.
I CAN'T HELP IT — I WAS THERE WHILE YOU WERE DREAMIN'.

August 19, 1934

GOOD MO

ON RISING —

AN INTERVIEW WITH FERD JOHNSON

Ferd Johnson is well into his ninth decade of life, and his eighth decade drawing cartoons to make people laugh. He was virtually in at the birth—during its formative period—of *Moon Mullins*, one of America's handful of classic strips, a comic saga of unlikely adventures and memorable *poseurs* worthy of Dickens. Johnson remained the right-hand man of creator Frank Willard, and succeeded to full duties upon Willard's death in 1958. But Johnson also created some features on his own as well, including the inspired cowboy farce *Texas Slim*. These strips—and the colorful career and friendships—are discussed in the Ferd Johnson interview below, conducted by Rick Marschall and Gary Groth.

Note: *Nemo* #14 contained an appraisal of *Moon Mullins* and a selection of vintage reprints.

RICK MARSCHALL: *You were once billed as the "Youngest Boy Cartoonist in Captivity"?*

JOHNSON: That's true. It was crazy, but I had a full page in the *Chicago Tribune* when I was 19 years old. Back then they had eight comics, a full page for each comic. I left home when I was 17, and went to art school, and got kicked out after two months for a very unusual reason. They insisted you buy your materials down at the school. Well, I found out I could buy my 170 pens down the street for three cents, and they wanted 10 cents. I got into an argument about it, and they said, "Well, if you don't like what we do, you don't have to come back." In the meantime, Frank Willard had come up to the school because the owner of the school knew him, and asked Willard to teach a cartoon class that I was in. Willard came up for two weeks—and then he couldn't take any more of that, but he looked around, saw everybody's stuff, and he saw mine. I guess he thought I had something because he invited me up to the *Tribune*. Well, I didn't hesitate; I think I beat him up there before he got there. But anyway, I just sat there and watched him work. It was fine. It was an office about half this big (motioning to cramped studio), they used to have these old steam-heat things with bumps all over 'em. I sat on that until I had ridges on my can. I don't know if he got tired of it or not, but I was there practically every day watching him. And then, he finally said, "Ferdie, if you're going to hang around here, I'm going to give you a job." So he gave me one for 15 bucks a week.

MARSCHALL: *Fifteen bucks a week.*

JOHNSON: And I wrote home, and told my folks, "Don't send me any more money, I've got it made!" I had a room at the Y and I had 10 bucks to go on food. I did make it!

MARSCHALL: *Let me put this in context. This would be 1922?*

JOHNSON: 1923.

MARSCHALL: *Let's go back a little further. When and where you were born?*

JOHNSON: I was born in a little town called Spring Creek, Pennsylvania. That's about 60 miles east of Erie. It's just a village. Real country, in the foothills of the Alleghenies. And, I guess I got to drawing in school, like all kids do. I loved it. I did all the posters and things, at the church socials and all that stuff. But I couldn't give it up, I wanted to do it all the time. So, I entered a cartoon contest at the *Erie Dispatch-Herald*, and won it when I was 12 years old.

MARSCHALL: *What year would that be?*

JOHNSON: Oh, God, I don't. . . there you go again. I was born in '05, and I was about 12 years old.

MARSCHALL: *All right, '17. But I'm just trying to think who your favorite cartoonists would have been. Were you copying certain artists then?*

JOHNSON: Yeah, I copied *The Gumps*. I copied *Mutt and Jeff*—whoever was along then. . . Fontaine Fox. . . And there weren't many of those cartoons in our paper then. My dad bought me a cartoon correspondence course, the Landon "School," for 20 bucks. And I went through that, and won this contest, and Dad thought I might have something. So he sent for the Federal Course. I went through that, went to high school about seven miles away. I was their art editor all during my four years I was there. I used to have to wait from three o'clock to seven o'clock for a train back, three or four hours. So I spent that in the library. And, of course, read up on all of these guys that I liked. And coming home, this train would come from Erie or Philadelphia or someplace like that. And I'd gather up all those papers. That's where I saw all the nationals.

MARSCHALL: *The out-of-town papers.*

JOHNSON: And then I would go back and look them up in *Who's Who* and thought, "God damn it, if I ever got into that thing, that would be something."

MARSCHALL: *Did you get* Cartoons *magazine at the time? Do you remember that monthly?*

JOHNSON: Yes, yes. I loved that.

MARSCHALL: *Showed a lot of work by a lot of the artists.*

JOHNSON: And (the business) was much better than it is now. Everybody had a different style and was more interesting. Now they're a bunch of clones. Most of them. Some of 'em stand out. They all came after Ronald Searle.

MARSCHALL: *Ronald Searle and Oliphant, and they all look like that now.*

JOHNSON: I was up for the National Cartoonists Society award in '59, or '60, and (Searle)'s the one that won it that year. He deserved it; he had something different. I still like his stuff. I think he started this whole new trend of crazy drawing.

MARSCHALL: *With the longer faces. The more abstract stuff.*

GARY GROTH: *Ralph Steadman's probably his disciple.*

JOHNSON: Well, I very fortunate to go up at Willard's office, because he was at one end of the hall. And next to me is Frank King (*Gasoline Alley*), Carl Ed (*Harold Teen*), next to him, Gaar Williams, I don't know if you know his stuff.
MARSCHALL: *Sure.*
JOHNSON: And Harold Gray was assistant to Sid Smith then (on *The Gumps*).
MARSCHALL: *I want to ask about those guys, but you mentioned the school in Chicago. What school was it? Was it the Academy or . . . ?*
JOHNSON: The Academy of Fine Arts.
MARSCHALL: *The class you had for two weeks before you proved too smart for them on the supplies—who was the teacher for that? They had a lot of cartoonists, through the years, teaching.*
JOHNSON: It was Quin Hall, I think.
MARSCHALL: *Oh, yeah?*
JOHNSON: He was pretty good.
MARSCHALL: *Yeah, he went on to do sports cartoons for Hearst.*
JOHNSON: But I had the greatest teachers in the world (at the Chicago *Tribune*). I had the top cartoonists in the country, right near me. And they were swell. If I got stuck, I'd go to them, they'd help me, show me how to do stuff. In those days, the guys could draw anything. Gaar Williams, he was terrific, he never had a clipping, every bit of that stuff . . .
MARSCHALL: *Out of his head?*
JOHNSON: Right in his head. And most of the guys were that way. Carey Orr was up there, I remember him, a political cartoonist; John T. McCutcheon was on another floor. But I knew all these guys, and they all helped me out.
MARSCHALL: *Well, if there was a Golden Age of a Golden City of cartooning, it had to be Chicago in the early '20s, with so many cartoonists, that were working, I guess, all in the office.*
JOHNSON: This bunch was. But later on when Chet Gould (*Dick Tracy*) came along and Harold (Gray) started *Annie*—I don't know if you knew it, but the first thing he submitted was called *Little Orphan Otto.*
MARSCHALL: *Yeah, I've heard that. Did you ever see that?*
JOHNSON: Oh, yeah, I saw the originals he submitted. He showed them to me. And (Syndicate head Captain Joseph M.) Patterson thought a girl would be better. And he was right. Patterson was quite a genius that way. He named all the comics—*The Gumps* and others. Well, I sat there when all these guys from the "Overset Club," which was on the same floor, had their editorial meetings. And when they got through, they'd come through our office to play duck tennis or something, with a little rope, and they'd put it out there like a tennis net. And they had to climb over my desk to get out the window, to get to this thing. All these big shots on the paper. So I made damn sure I always had a cartoon stuck up there where they couldn't help but see it. And it worked!
MARSCHALL: *Now at this point you were just assisting?*
JOHNSON: Yeah. Willard. On *Moon Mullins.* Well, I had a couple of jobs. I colored *The Gumps* for eight bucks a week. He was making $150,000—like a million now. Then I started coloring *Winnie Winkle* for another eight. I was building up a big income.
MARSCHALL: *Now this was on the* Tribune. *You were employed by the* Tribune *or by Willard?*
JOHNSON: Willard, and the *Tribune* for the color stuff.
MARSCHALL: *All right. Would you do spot art or decorations, stuff for the paper, too?*
JOHNSON: Yes, whenever they needed some advertising stuff. I had a thing going called *Want-Ad Wanda* or something. Stupid thing. And advertisers around town would want a cartoon or something, I was cheap.
MARSCHALL: *You were available.*
JOHNSON: Yes. I was there, I lived at that place.
GROTH: *I just had a question. When you said you colored one of his strips, does that mean that you had a stat and then you colored the stat?*
JOHNSON: No, that's, there's one up there (on the wall). That was one of Willard's. I colored his too. And in those days you colored the originals . . . They'd shoot it four times on a plate or something on a plate, in the Ben Day room, wipe out everything except the yellow, everything except the red, and blue, and that way they had four colors, and they could get about everything they wanted.
MARSCHALL: *They shot from that?*
JOHNSON: Yeah.
MARSCHALL: *At King, on the Hearst strips, when they colored on the originals, it was the sloppiest coloring you ever saw, because it was just a guide for the engraving room.*
JOHNSON: I was pretty careful. In fact, I changed the looks of the paper, because they let the Ben Day men color it, and their belief in coloring was put every goddam color over each other, and it just turned out like a lot of mud.
MARSCHALL: *When you went to work with Willard, how soon after the beginning of the strip was it, and what did you do—did you letter, or just erase? Or ink for him? Or what kind of—*
JOHNSON: Backgrounds and lettering. I went to work for him about two months after he started.
MARSCHALL: *Two months after he'd started!*
JOHNSON: In '23. I've been around this thing a long time! Meanwhile, I always had something else going on. So, I was doing all right.
MARSCHALL: *You did a strip called* Texas Slim *in the '20s.*
JOHNSON: I told you about the guys going over my desk?
MARSCHALL: *Yeah.*
JOHNSON: Patterson finally said, "I think you can do a comic." And he had this idea for a Western. He called me up to his office, and named it *Texas Slim.*
MARSCHALL: *That was* his *name?*
JOHNSON: Yes. And Dirty Dalton. I have a feeling that Willard named Dirty Dalton. Captain Patterson wanted a villain. And I, hell, I did that for a couple of years. I think the high point of my life was . . . I hadn't told my folks about it, and Dad was a station agent in Pennsylvania, and he had a pass. So I asked him to come out. I walked him up and down in front of the Tribune Tower and they had big billboards up there: "World's Youngest Cartoonist!" With my name and everything. I didn't tell him about it. The old man looked up at that and . . . I can still see his expression.
MARSCHALL: *That's terrific.*
JOHNSON: That was really something. I've never been that high since.
MARSCHALL: *That's when* Texas Slim *started?*
JOHNSON: Yes.
MARSCHALL: *That's great. '25, was that?*
JOHNSON: Yes.
MARSCHALL: *Was that Sunday only? I've never seen a daily.*
JOHNSON: Just Sunday. Well, I was going along pretty good for two years, and Patterson was nuts about Westerns. He'd see every Western movie that came out. He'd never been on a ranch. I had never been at that time. And he went out to Wyoming, got on a horse, the horse threw him. Damn near broke his neck. He came back, he was so goddam mad, he threw *Slim* out of the paper. (laughter) Later on, though, he started it up again.
MARSCHALL: *He started it in the comic book, I think, wasn't it, the* Tribune *Comic Book in the early '40s?*
JOHNSON: Yes.
MARSCHALL: *Was he dead then, Captain Patterson? Or did you have to sneak it past him?*
JOHNSON: No, he was doing all right . . .
MARSCHALL: *He had cooled towards horses then.*
JOHNSON: He went to New York to work on the *News* about that time. Dale Messick (*Brenda Starr*) was one of them who started on the *Tribune* Comic Book. The other guys just faded out.
MARSCHALL: *When* Texas Slim *died, did you do another strip then?*
JOHNSON: Well, not for some time. I did something called *Lovey Dovey* when they started a Detroit paper (the *Detroit Mirror*), and that only lasted about a year. The paper folded, and so did all the comics.
MARSCHALL: *That was about 1930?*
JOHNSON: Yep.
MARSCHALL: *That's when* Dick Tracy *started, right in the same section, I think?*
JOHNSON: Yeah, Gould and I . . . I had a half page and he had a half page. Only difference was, he went to town.
MARSCHALL: *Yeah, whatever happened to him?*
JOHNSON: My god, we had a lot of fun. I knew him before, or everybody did. He submitted stuff to Captain Patterson for a solid year. New stuff every week. Different. And everybody would look at him, and say, "Here comes the would-be comic artist." He kept coming until he brought a detective thing in. And that was the one for him. But in the meantime we used to go out to Chet's place, and he'd make home brew, we'd play cards . . .
MARSCHALL: *Home brew? You don't mean to say he defied the prohibition laws? (Mock serious) The creator of* Dick Tracy?

Young Ferd Johnson at work in the Chicago *Tribune* bullpen on a *Texas Slim* Sunday page, ca. 1925.

JOHNSON: Everybody did. Home brew doesn't count. Willard and I would always stop by there, he lived in Kenilworth. I'd drive Willard home sometimes. I was a chauffeur and bodyguard, everything else.
MARSCHALL: *Well, I'm interested to know a little more details about the "stars." You mentioned Gould—that you would say, "Oh, here he comes again with a new strip." Was it a little bit of making fun, like, "When is this guy ever going to get into an honest line of work?"*
JOHNSON: Yeah. He had been showing up there with a new strip for months, and it got to be joke. Nobody thought he had a damn thing. Because he kept being turned down.
MARSCHALL: *There were some other cartoonists at the* Tribune. *Garrett Price was. . .*
JOHNSON: Yeah, he was in the art department.
MARSCHALL: *Editorial art? Decorations and things?*
JOHNSON: Yeah, he was a good artist. Any time I needed some *real* art, I went to him. He started a comic later on.
MARSCHALL: White Boy.
JOHNSON: *White Boy*, yeah. That was a long time afterwards.
MARSCHALL: *Did he work as an assistant to any of the strip artists?*
JOHNSON: No. Just in the art department. He was so much better an artist than anybody around there.
MARSCHALL: *You started to do this before—can you recreate the art department? They all reported to work every morning. . .*
JOHNSON: Most every day. They kept pretty good hours. But there was a lot of goofing around.
MARSCHALL: *I imagine things like staying out and shooting craps and not getting any work done. . .*
JOHNSON: Well, whatever else went on around there, everybody had a boot locker, it's just a that they finally realized they couldn't work there, so they started working at home. The next step, they started going all over the country. Florida, out here (California)—we came out in '40. But we went to Florida before that. I got married in '30, and was there one year before that, but I followed the job around (with Willard). I lived wherever I could, a house or something like that, rent was very cheap. It was pretty rugged stuff some places, with weeds and everything. Kids used to play in that until one day we saw a cat come in, head like this—it had been hit by a rattlesnake. We never went back to that kind of country!
MARSCHALL: *Yeah, I guess.*
JOHNSON: When I went down there, we always stayed at the hotel—safer. But every summer, Willard and I would take off and go some place, because Florida is an awful place in the summer. Was then. Bugs, mosquitoes—people kept spiders as big as your hand, like that, because they'd kill mosquitoes and things. They had pet names for them. The cockroaches, you name it.
MARSCHALL: *I guess when you went with the Chicago* Tribune, *Sidney Smith was probably the biggest name on the staff.*
JOHNSON: Yes, and he was the first one to have a story in the strip. A guy named Sol Hess wrote it.
MARSCHALL: *Did he write it full-time, every word, or did he just give tips and patter and dialogue and story ideas?*
JOHNSON: Hess wrote it. Sid did before; he came along with the story stuff. Sid was having an awful lot of fun with a hundred and fifty thousand bucks a year coming in. And he had two or three Locomobiles and he had a big place out in Lake Geneva.
MARSCHALL: *He liked fast cars.*
JOHNSON: Yeah, and he had a steamboat there. The only time they ever had the steamboat on Lake Geneva. He lived in a fabulous apartment, about a block from where I did, in north

Chicago. I was in a cheap hotel and he was in this fabulous place by the Edgewater Beach Hotel. And he invited me out there . . . he spent a lot of time on me, he wanted to show me everything. He thought I looked kind of lonesome and out of place. A very nice guy. I guess you know the story of signing him up . . .

MARSCHALL: *It was a million-dollar contract.*

JOHNSON: Yeah. He got in his fast car, and he was drunk, started home, hit a telephone pole, and was decapitated.

MARSCHALL: *Decapitated.*

JOHNSON: What a finish.

MARSCHALL: *A vivid ending. Hess didn't work in office with him, did he?*

JOHNSON: No, he was a jeweler. He had a jewelry store.

MARSCHALL: *He kept his jewelry store?*

JOHNSON: I went up and bought my engagement ring from him.

MARSCHALL: *(Sarcastic) And I'm sure Smith paid him well, too?*

JOHNSON: I don't know. I'm not so sure.

MARSCHALL: *No, I mean, I'm guessing, he went and started his own strip, The* Nebbs, *so he must have . . .*

JOHNSON: I think he was rather poorly paid for what he did. I wouldn't guess, but I know he paid Harold Gray $200 a week, which looked fabulous to me.

MARSCHALL: *What kind of work did Gray do on* The Gumps? *Lettering or inking?*

JOHNSON: Well, he gradually was drawing the whole thing, while Sid was off having fun. Harold was a good artist, imitative, he was very fast, he would do a week's work in one trip down there. Probably a long session, but he could do it. He used to write those balloons out just like nothing. The drawing was pretty simple, too. Sid was a great artist in this way. If he wanted to make a fingernail stand out, he could do that, but of course he had a lot of space, six columns. With the damn shading and stuff like that, you just can't do it now.

MARSCHALL: *You don't have the space to do it. There's another difference, too. Now everything is offset, and then you had the metal printing plates for clarity and detail . . .*

JOHNSON: I loved to do that shading. Frank was proud of it, too. He asked Patterson what he thought of it, and he said, "Looks like a lot of *hay* to me!"

GROTH: *What's the purpose of the line passing through the bottom third of the strips in the '30s?*

JOHNSON: Oh, that was for the *New York News*. They ran it five columns, and used it on the inside section. The *Tribune* used the whole thing. *Moon* ran on the front of the sports page.

MARSCHALL: *Some papers, in order to get more daily strips on the page would slice them off at the bottom . . . I think, with those lines that are drawn, didn't they shoot a plate before the lines were drawn in? For the clients who would take it that way?*

GROTH: *God, they did this on an original?*

MARSCHALL: *Sometimes, yeah. It's how little they thought of originals, that they just . . .*

JOHNSON: I threw away hundreds and hundreds of them through the years. One time we moved from Beverly Hills and went back east. I didn't have any place to store them, I threw out a whole garbage can full of *Texas Slims*. Years later, they were for sale in New York. Somebody had picked them up.

MARSCHALL: *Oh, you mean they didn't get destroyed?*

JOHNSON: No, somebody just went down the alley, saw them and rescued them.

MARSCHALL: *We're about to do a book series of* Little Orphan Annie. *If the public will stand for it, the complete run of Harold Gray's version. So I'm kind of interested in Gray. When he left* The Gumps, *did he have a fight with Smith, or was it just that he wanted to do his own?*

JOHNSON: No, *Annie* came along, and he was ready. *Annie* caught fire.

MARSCHALL: *Did Smith pick somebody else up? Is that when Stanley Link came in?*

JOHNSON: Yes. He finally left the floor there and took a studio down the street a ways. He couldn't take all that promotion stuff.

MARSCHALL: *Gray?*

JOHNSON: No, no. Smith. And Stanley Link. I knew him quite well . . . The syndicate was on that floor also.

MARSCHALL: *O.K. Who else? You said Gaar Williams was on that floor, too?*

JOHNSON: Yes, about two doors from us. We had a little alcove or something with three offices. Willard, King's office and Gaar Williams and Carl Ed.

MARSCHALL: *It's been one of the injustices of comics history that Briggs is remembered a bit, and H.T. Webster, and J.R. Williams, but somehow Gaar Williams—*

JOHNSON: Those were the big ones back then . . .

MARSCHALL: *Yeah. And Tad. All doing those panel cartoons, but Gaar Williams has been forgotten, and he did great stuff.*

JOHNSON: Yes. And he was another guy that would help me out. He had a place out in Glencoe. And whenever he went downtown, he would turn the keys over to me, I kind of was the watchdog there. They were really swell, those guys were.

MARSCHALL: *Carl Ed's* Harold Teen *was only a couple of years old at that point. Did he have anyone working with him?*

JOHNSON: Later on, I got a fellow named Doc Williams a job with him. Also, when Sals Bostwick died . . .

MARSCHALL: *I was going to ask you about him.*

JOHNSON: . . . He left Frank King, he got something with Hearst going. *Heroes*—no, at the *Tribune* he had the *Heroes of the Week*, which was very cute; half page on Sunday. And Hearst wanted him, so he made him an offer. Of course, he couldn't resist. At that time, King asked me to get him somebody. Sent him a friend of mine at art school, John Chase, who turned out to be a political cartoonist. Well, he went to work for Frank King, another $15-a-week deal.

MARSCHALL: *O.K. For the chronology on Frank King: Was Bostwick his first assistant, as far as you know?*

JOHNSON: Yes.

MARSCHALL: *And then Chase?*

JOHNSON: Yes. Chase was only there a couple of years, and then he had this offer from the New Orleans *Item*. And he was only making $15 and they offered him $30, and he jumped at it. Anyway, it was his home town. He wanted to go down there.

MARSCHALL: *Do you remember who else through the years worked with King?*

JOHNSON: King always bragged that he could make an artist out of anybody, and to prove it, when Chase left, he went down and picked up a shipping clerk, in the syndicate. His name was Bill Perry. And he sure as hell made a cartoonist out of him.

MARSCHALL: *Yeah, he drew the Sunday page for years. Do you remember what year that might have been?*

JOHNSON: (pause) Oh, I would say '27, '28.

MARSCHALL: *That early?*

JOHNSON: I had the page going in '25. And Chase was there then. Chase left about '28. I'm just guessing, but I think so.

MARSCHALL: *Bostwick has always interested me because he's a minor name—I think he died shortly after he went with Hearst, right?*

JOHNSON: That's right. He was very young, 21 when he died. He got a busted appendix or something.

MARSCHALL: *His style, when I saw his own work, kind of looked a little like yours and Willard's. Did he ever work on* Moon Mullins, *or was he a fan of it?*

JOHNSON: No, just, that's the way it came out. Yeah, he liked Willard's work very much. Once in a while I would help him with his strip . . . That folded very quickly—maybe thanks to me—but anyway . . .

MARSCHALL: *Well, let me shift to you and Willard. I really didn't know you worked—what did you say—the second month of this strip, when you were on it?*

JOHNSON: It started about . . . the middle of June. I went there (to art school) the first of July, and *Moon Mullins* had been going about two weeks . . .

MARSCHALL: *You did lettering and backgrounds and stuff at first. Did you pretty quickly graduate to figures, or did Willard keep that for himself?*

JOHNSON: Not for a couple of years. Then he'd pencil them in very carefully, and I'd go over them in ink. And I got the hang of it pretty fast, so after that, he just did the heads. And then I'd— well, he pencilled them in, too—I'd ink the figures, the backgrounds, and he just did the heads.

MARSCHALL: *Yeah. You were a good study, because your* Texas Slim, *with the figures, the "hay" and everything really looked like Willard's.*

JOHNSON: Yeah, I can see it now when I look back. At the time I didn't think so.

MARSCHALL: *At what point did you start to get involved in story creation, and gag-writing, and character development?*

JOHNSON: Well, he was pretty good with gags. I think, he did everything for about 10 years, except what I helped him with. About the next 10 he kind of went back and forth on this thing. I'd get an idea, of course, and sometimes it was good, and mostly it wasn't!

MARSCHALL: *He'd tell you?*

JOHNSON: Sure! He was a tough guy . . . he was a nice guy,

TEXAS SLIM
JANUARY 31, 1926
THIS LAMP YOU BOUGHT CERTAINLY COMES IN HANDY, TEXAS.
To Rick Marschall 61 years later
FRED JOHNSON 87
TEXAS - TOMORROW'S MISS JESSIE'S BIRTHDAY AND I ORDERED A SWELL PIN TO STICK HER SOMBRERO ON WITH AT THE EUREKA GENERAL STORE.
YOU SURE PICKED A PUNK DAY TO GO TO TOWN FOR IT DIRTY - YOU'LL GET SOAKED LIKE A SPONGE -
OH-NO- I AIN'T GOIN' TO GET SOAKED, TEXAS- I'M GOIN' TO SEND YOU FOR IT.
OH, I GUESS DIRTY WON'T MAKE SUCH A SPLASH WITH HIS LITTLE DINKY PIN = I'M GONNA BUY MISS JESSIE SOMETHIN' SWELL.
THERE - THAT LAMP'S JUST WHAT I WANT, MR. EUREKA - NEVER MIND WRAPPING IT UP, IT'S STOPPED RAINING.
I HAD TO HOCK MY SPURS TO RAISE ENOUGH DOUGH TO BUY THIS LAMP = BUT THEN I GOT THIS PIN OF DIRTY'S.
HEY!
STOP IT, NELLIE - STOP!
WHOAAA
WHOA
WHOA BABY
PLOP!
GEE WHIZ! I SURE HAD A ROUGH TRIP, DIRTY - BUT I DIDN'T BREAK THIS LAMP - AIN'T IT A PIP?
NEVER MIND THE LAMP - WHERE'S MY PIN?
WELL I'LL BE DARNED = I LOST IT.
WHAT?
IF I COULD JUST REMEMBER EXACTLY WHERE I BOUNCED OFF THAT HORSE.
FRED JOHNSON

Ashville, North Carolina—"The Land of the Sky"—at the country club in 1936: Front row—Billy DeBeck (*Barney Google*); Marie Willard; Frank Willard (*Moon Mullins*). Back row—DeBeck assistant Fred Lasswell; Baldy Baldwin (remembered by Johnson as "a character like in Jimmy Gleason's movie *The Hustler*"); and Ferd Johnson.

but he was a hard guy. He never took any crap . . .

MARSCHALL: *Was he a hard drinker, too?*

JOHNSON: Oh, yeah. They all were in those days. He could handle it, though. I never saw him drunk for many, many years. But he drank an awful lot. Out here, when we came out here, he belonged to a club, and I did too. And the guys would ask me, "Is he drinking?" If I said, "yes," they wouldn't bet with him, because he would play like a son-of-a-gun. It relaxed him or something. But, if he wasn't drinking, they'd bet him anyting he wanted to! That's a fact. I followed him all over the country because, well, it was a job. Every six months he'd move someplace.

MARSCHALL: *Literally?*

JOHNSON: Yeah. We'd go to Florida and follow the golf guys up the coast all the way to Maine. Got to play in a lot of the pro-amateurs. He loved to bet. That's why I got to be a pretty good golfer, because I couldn't afford to lose. I'd get out there and practice like hell.

MARSCHALL: *Was he restless, or . . . I mean, moving so much?*

JOHNSON: Well, it's because Florida is such a lousy place in the summertime.

MARSCHALL: *Florida would be the home base, then?*

JOHNSON: Yeah. Then we'd . . . Two or three of our favorite places would be Asheville, North Carolina, up in the mountains. And then we went to Maine for several years. He'd live in the swank hotel and I lived in a farm house. We had more fun, I tell you.

MARSCHALL: *Were you each married at the time?*

JOHNSON: Oh, yeah. My son Tom was with us. And we lived in Wisconsin a year or two. Mexico City—we went down there, and he was going to spend the summer, got along fine for about a month, and then *our* government stepped in and charged 50% duty on the stuff coming in. So we got out of there in a hurry. I think we went back to North Carolina, Chicago. We had an office in Chicago . . .

MARSCHALL: *One of the great things about* Moon Mullins *through the years was the continuities and the characters like Dickens could create . . .*

JOHNSON: And then you had six wonderful characters.

MARSCHALL: *The main characters, yes. What were the work habits with you guys? How would you create these characters? Would you go out golfing and do this and that, and then have to do three weeks in two days? Would you have long sessions discussing plots?*

JOHNSON: We always believed in getting the fun done first, and then we'd work. I played tennis for 10 years. Golf for 30. I played golf for about 30 years. We always played five days a week and worked at night. Which didn't make us popular with our wifes. That's the way it was.

MARSCHALL: *Always right on deadline?*

JOHNSON: We were always about 10 days ahead, that's all. We were supposed to be three weeks. As a result of that, he would call me and say, "Well, we're going to work tonight. Get a nap." So I would, and he never called. The next day I said, "The hell with it." I *didn't* take a nap, and he'd call. We'd start about eleven o'clock at night and work all that night. Get the stuff done by four o'clock in afternoon, to run out to Burbank to put out on a plane.

MARSCHALL: *A plane?*

JOHNSON: In those days you could reach up to the pilots. They were nice guys, and we'd have it all wrapped with stamps, he'd mail it from New York, so it'd get there. Once in a while he'd miss it. And the papers in those days would just leave a blank spot.

MARSCHALL: *Really?*

JOHNSON: Now there are so damn many cartoons you don't

do that any more.

MARSCHALL: *There's a story about George McManus (*Bringing Up Father*) doing that when he was always late. And I don't know if it's a true story, but every time a plane would go down, in a crash, he would claim to the syndicate that his strips were on that plane. At one time it was a plane that was going east to west, which blew his whole story.*

JOHNSON: I always thought that was very funny. We used to practice with him every morning. When we worked. We were at the same restaurant, and we had been up all night, and he was just starting. He was an early riser.

GROTH: *George McManus?*

JOHNSON: Yeah. He gave me that cutting board there.

GROTH: *Do you have any specific recollections of McManus?*

JOHNSON: Well, he was a very likeable guy. He would smoke a cigar during breakfast. (Laughter) Always had a cigar in his face. Coffee cup here and a cigar there. And he was a boozer. The guy that used to own the Beverly Wilshire and he were pals. And they'd go to Dinty Moore's or some place like that, and they would drink and drink and drink. The story is, and McManus said it's true, he got damn tired of going to the can every half hour or something like that, so he rigged up a tube! The can was right next door and he never went to the can. (laughter) And that's all. You can't put that in (the interview). But it's the truth. He had a brother named Leo out here—he was a kind of character, kind of like Uncle Willie (from *Moon Mullins*).

MARSCHALL: *An Uncle Willie type. I heard the same thing about a third brother, named Charlie McManus, who really, if it wasn't for the McManus name, couldn't have done anything.*

JOHNSON: Yeah, well he worked for Hearst and took care of the mailing-room stuff or something like that.

MARSCHALL: *But Leo was out here with George?*

JOHNSON: Yes.

MARSCHALL: *Working for him?*

JOHNSON: No, he was just being supported by George. He was a fun guy . . . he looked like Jiggs. Well, McManus did, too.

GROTH: *In the sense that he was stout?*

JOHNSON: Yeah.

MARSCHALL: *Irish. With cigars.*

JOHNSON: Yeah. His wife was sick, so he put her in an apartment out on Wilshire. I think they were legally separated. His wife had a nurse or something.

MARSCHALL: *George McManus's wife?*

JOHNSON: Yeah. She passed away. He moved down to another place, closer to where I lived in Beverly Hills. Drove him crazy, because everybody was swimming and yelling and all that stuff.

GROTH: *When you went out and ate breakfast with McManus, that was the late '20s?*

JOHNSON: '30s. Or '40s. Mostly '40s, I think.

MARSCHALL: *Was Zeke Zekely working with him then?*

JOHNSON: Yes. As far as I know, Zeke was the only assistant he ever had. He's still around up there, doing something.

MARSCHALL: *Yeah. Still draws like McManus, too.*

JOHNSON: Does he? I didn't know he was still drawing or not.

MARSCHALL: *When he draws, it looks like Jiggs. He does industrial comic books, give-aways and manuals, and commercial things.*

JOHNSON: Several years ago he had something set up for a telephone conversation with somebody in Canada through the radio. I never heard any more about it. That was about the time this *For Better or For Worse* started.

MARSCHALL: *The new strip.*

JOHNSON: Yeah. It's a damn good one. It's one of the few good ones that's come out. This new one, this *Calvin and Hobbes* . . .

MARSCHALL: *You like that?*

JOHNSON: I like it too. He can really draw, that guy. The rest of them . . . I wonder why?

MARSCHALL: *You're not a fan of* Doonesbury*?*

JOHNSON: I admire his publicity (laughter). I m not an admirer, but maybe I'm being jealous. Yeah, he's got a lot on the ball, he must have, because you don't get anywhere unless you have

A Short-lived comic strip of domestic mayhem was *Lovey Dovey* for the Tribune-News Syndicate in the 1930s; the protagonist looked suspiciously like Ferd Johnson himself.

LOVEY-DOVEY Ferd Johnson
THE DOCTOR SAID I SHOULD PLAY GOLF FOR MY HEALTH SO I BOUGHT A SET OF CLUBS TODAY
DO YOU KNOW HOW TO PLAY?
SURE IT'S SIMPLE. ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL AND FOLLOW THROUGH LIKE THIS:
CRASH!
OH!
OUCH!
OUTSIDE!
-BUT PRECIOUS
OH WELL, I'LL JUST BAT A FEW AGAINST THE FENCE AND WAIT TILL SHE COOLS OFF A BIT BEFORE I TELL HER WHO'S BOSS AROUND HERE.
HECK! OVER TH' FENCE.
?
OW! WHO IN —?
AND WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING, SCREW?
COME BACK HERE! I'LL LEARN YOU TO PLAY THAT GAME IN A PASTURE WHERE IT BELONGS
WHAT ON EARTH HAS HAPPENED NOW?
I THINK A TRAIN HIT ME
HONEY, THE DOCTOR IS ON THE PHONE. HE WANTS TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE TAKEN UP GOLF FOR YOUR HEALTH YET?
TELL HIM IT AIN'T HEALTHY

a lot on the ball.
GROTH: *How about* Garfield, *speaking of having something on the ball?*
JOHNSON: Oh, I don't like the strip, but (Jim Davis) is a smart guy commercially. He's made a million bucks, I guess. He just started a new strip (*U.S. Acres*). I didn't think much of it.
MARSCHALL: *No. Do you see* The Far Side? *That off-the-wall panel?*
JOHNSON: Yeah. That's a good one.
MARSCHALL: *That is your cup of tea?*
JOHNSON: Yeah, I like that. I didn't know much about it until my grandson started pointing it out. And other people were talking about it, and I started looking at it.
MARSCHALL: *Yeah, it's been a hit.*
JOHNSON: And he's got some clones.
MARSCHALL: *Oh yeah.*
JOHNSON: But the most of new strips I think are awful. I don't know what the editors are thinking of.
GROTH: *Jim Davis is kind of being his own clone.*
JOHNSON: Well, I think I despise that because he bumped me here on the *Register* (laughter). *U.S. Acres*—God, that thing is awful. They run me amongst the ads, now and then. Maybe that's the way you ease out after 65 years.
MARSCHALL: *You mentioned before that* Moon Mullins—*maybe this is just in the* Tribune—*ran on the sports pages.*
JOHNSON: Yes, in the front of the sports pages.
MARSCHALL: *And when it began, it was kind of a sports strip, wasn't it? Moon hung around boxing training camps and things like that.*
JOHNSON: Yes, but there's not much humor in sports after you do a certain number of things. I've always thought it had possibilities, but Willard couldn't get ideas, after a few months. He told Patterson he just couldn't cut it. They used to send him down to Florida on training trips with the baseball teams.
MARSCHALL: *So, at the beginning, that was actually supposed to be the theme of the strip, and then he just wanted out from that?*
JOHNSON: Patterson wanted a hard-boiled guy (as a cartoonist). And he'd heard of Willard's reputation, which was pretty bad. Seems he beat up his editor or something like that. And he swore, the reason he did it was, he'd submit these ideas, and they'd be turned down by a guy named Block.
MARSCHALL: *Rudolph Block?*
JOHNSON: Yeah. And they'd appear in George McManus's strip.
MARSCHALL: *Oh. Gee. . .*
JOHNSON: I don't blame Willard for being sore about that.
MARSCHALL: *Sure, sure.*
JOHNSON: That's really why he left Hearst, because he couldn't stand this guy.
MARSCHALL: *Well, I'll tell you something, this is parenthetical, but I was talking about Rudolph Block just yesterday, with the daughter of R.F. Outcault, you know, of* Buster Brown *and* Yellow Kid. *And I was asking her if she remembered her father talking about Block, and she leaned towards me and whispered, she said, "He said he was a son of a bitch."*
JOHNSON: That's the way everybody saw him.
MARSCHALL: *This 93-year-old woman tells me this! Also John Dirks, the son of Rudolph Dirks, said the same thing. Everything in the history books about why Dirks left Hearst, that's not true. It's really that Dirks couldn't get along with Rudolph Block, the comic editor. And Dirks just said, "I'm leaving."*
JOHNSON: He'd steal ideas from all the guys that didn't amount to much and feed them to their stars.
GROTH: *Is it true that Willard beat this guy up?*
JOHNSON: Yep. Well, Patterson heard about it, and he said, "He's my man." For this strip, *Moon Mullins.*
GROTH: *Was Willard a big guy?*
JOHNSON: No. About your size.
MARSCHALL: *A little shrimp, huh? (Laughter)*
JOHNSON: I didn't say that! But rather round, too.
MARSCHALL: *Okay. Thank you.*
JOHNSON: Plop!
GROTH: *You'll keep all this in.*
JOHNSON: He loved his booze and he loved his food. He went on to have diabetes.
MARSCHALL: *He did?*
JOHNSON: That was just about the time that insulin was coming in. He had to take a shot—he loved to go into a fancy restaurant, and I'd seen him do it many times, at the table, pull up his shirt and give himself a shot with this needle! People would just go white around him. Willard would laugh like hell.
GROTH: *How old would he have been when he did things like that?*
JOHNSON: Late 30s or 40s. He always was a kind of nut. A funny one.
MARSCHALL: *Of the six main characters in* Moon Mullins *or any of the characters who came and went, was Willard like any one in the strip?*
JOHNSON: Maybe like Moon. Rough and tough. He really wasn't, but he put on this act all the time. He'd pick a fight, but he always picked it with great, huge guys, because he said they won't hit back. They'd be ashamed to. (Laughter)
MARSCHALL: *Did he have glasses, too?*
JOHNSON: Oh yeah.
MARSCHALL: *All right, there you go.*
JOHNSON: He played it safe.
MARSCHALL: *Now, you were in tow throught the years. You didn't work through the mail, you went around the country with him.*
JOHNSON: I followed him, yeah.
MARSCHALL: *You were in on all this colorful stuff, and the restaurants and the. . .*
JOHNSON: Oh, yeah. We lived in hotels and in farm houses, apartments. We came out here in '40. Lived in apartments here. This is the first home I ever owned. We were in an apartment in Beverly Hills for 15 years, on the wrong side of the tracks.
MARSCHALL: *I didn't know there were tracks in Beverly Hills.*
JOHNSON: Oh, just on the apartment side of Wilshire. He had a big place there. Chester Morris, I think, had owned it and he bought it. I think for $25,000. And he got sore because the plumbing was bad, and he had to put in $8,000. Sold it and went to a hotel. . . El Royal. I bet that place is worth a million or a million and a half dollars, now!
MARSCHALL: *It's got to be. Did he stay friends through the years with Billy DeBeck (creator of* Barney Google*)?*
JOHNSON: Yes.
MARSCHALL: *So you must have known him?*
JOHNSON: We used to play golf together. Billy was in St. Pete. We were in Tampa.
MARSCHALL: *What can you tell me about him? I hear he was a cocky little guy, too.*
JOHNSON: Yeah. But nice, I mean.
MARSCHALL: *But nice. A little more dapper than Willard, was he?*
JOHNSON: I think so. Like, he went to Europe and lived there a while. Came back with a beret and all that stuff. He was a cute guy, he really was. We played a lot of golf together. That's where he met Fred Lasswell. He saw some posters that Lasswell did for—I don't know what—a church or some damn thing like that, stuck up on the bulletin board in the clubhouse; and Billy saw it and said, "This kid is good." And he hired him. And I forget what he was paid at first, a small amount, but he lived with Billy DeBeck and his wife over on Shell Island. Many years later, Fred told me, "You know, that son of a bitch took out my board out of the thirty bucks." But he made Fred copy Charles Dana Gibson—the most beautiful drawings. One a day, for a year. That's what made the kid.
MARSCHALL: *Gibson?*
JOHNSON: Yeah.
MARSCHALL: *Why Gibson?*
JOHNSON: Well, DeBeck thought he was the best guy in the business. So Fred is a whiz at that kind of stuff—shading, but you can't do that stuff any more. On his Christmas cards, you can tell.
MARSCHALL: *Yeah, then he has fun.* Google, *as a strip, was very similar to* Moon Mullins. *That started as a sports strip too. . .*
JOHNSON: Yeah, well, they lived together for years. Willard came out of the army, and was on the old *Chicago Herald* with DeBeck. That's when he first knew him. And frank did some kind of a page. A feature called. . . (pause)
MARSCHALL: *Is that the* Out-of-Luck Club?
JOHNSON: Yes. He thought it was a terrible name. But then he got drafted, went to the First World War, in the camouflage outfit. He didn't get in any fighting, but he came back from the war in New York, and Billy DeBeck was pretty well established with *Barney Google* then. And he knew Frank was out of work, so he took him in. Billy was married at the time, but Frank wasn't. . . And he helped Billy with some of his work. So I think that's why it started looking like that. He also helped on a lot of strips down at King Features. They wouldn't show up, and be late, and he called himself a "forger." And he told me a

Ferd Johnson spent many years flirting with the pallette. In 1923 he was enrolled at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts but dropped out to cartoon instead. In 1929 he was an instructor at the National Academy of Art, but then met and married his wife Doris. In 1948 he enrolled in painting classes at Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles—in the only regular class Norman Rockwell ever conducted. Johnson remembers: "Rockwell started me painting. When he found out what I did he said, 'If you can draw like that, why waste your time being a cartoonist? Be an oil painter!' I did, but I still liked to eat, so I stuck to cartooning too." Herewith, Johnson and Rockwell; and one of Johnson's award-winning oils, *Poppy at Fourth*. Johnson studied Impressionism under Alois Lecoque, who had been associated with Renoir, Modigliani, and Utrillo.

THAT'S THE TICKET...
WUMP ST.! ®
IT'S 1323 WUMP ST.!!
OH, NO-- NOT AGAIN...
FERD + TOM JOHNSON
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--NIGHTMARE. HE WAS DREAMING HE WON TH' STATE LOTTERY AND THEY LOST HIS ADDRESS.

A recent example of *Moon Mullins*. Note that Kayo still sleeps in the dresser drawer.

number of strips, how he used to "forge" them.
MARSCHALL: *He had the nickname "Doc" then, right? "Doc" Willard?*
JOHNSON: Yeah.
MARSCHALL: *Did he keep that through his life?*
JOHNSON: To old-time people. His father was a dentist; that's where it came from. A lousy dentist. He ruined my teeth. (Laughter)
MARSCHALL: *You said, for the first 10 years, you did backgrounds and such on* Moon Mullins. . .
JOHNSON: Lettering and stuff.
MARSCHALL: *Then you started to do more and more.*
JOHNSON: I started inking the figures. And, once in a while, he'd ink in a figure, but not very often after 10 years.
MARSCHALL: *O.K. What about the writing? When did you start contributing gags?*
JOHNSON: When Willard became 50 years old (1943), he said he'd had it, he couldn't think any more.
MARSCHALL: *50?*
JOHNSON: Yeah. And so he actually, he really stopped. So I started feeding him a lot of stuff then. I gave him four or five ideas a week. And we did what we called paste-ups. We'd take old strips and reword them, change them a little bit.
MARSCHALL: *He still kept his hand in?*
JOHNSON: Yes. But the last 10 years (1948-58) he started to get sick and I think I did most of the work. I also had this page going, and I was pretty well loaded.
MARSCHALL: Texas Slim.
JOHNSON: He got diabetes. He had a heart attack and he had a stroke. And that all happened in the last 10 years. So he couldn't work.
MARSCHALL: *And you did* Texas Slim *at the same time?*
JOHNSON: Yes.
MARSCHALL: *When did that start up again? '41, '42, '43? Around there?*
JOHNSON: 1940, I think.
MARSCHALL: *'40. And continued to '58 when you took over* Moon *full-time. Something I'm awful interested in, want to know about—the stories were so great in* Moon Mullins. *These trips to Florida and the mysteries. . .*
JOHNSON: The story strips were just coming in, so Patterson asked him to do it. Willard hated it, because he said it wouldn't be funny any more.
MARSCHALL: *But that was great stuff.*
JOHNSON: Yes.
MARSCHALL: *That was great stuff. Did you knock around those continuities, just sit back and say, "Well, let's have him go here?" And, "What happens then?" He bounced ideas off you that way?*
JOHNSON: I was fairly good at that kind of stuff. And I could go through old stuff and pick out gags and make them fit into stories. Since I've taken it over I swear I've never re-done old ones. But now and then I read some old stuff, and I think, "By God, I did that last week." I think it registers up there and you don't know it.
MARSCHALL: *You've been on this strip since '23. And it's 1987 now. I'm not too good at math, I'll figure it out before we go to press, but that's a lot of strips. A couple of things are going to bounce around in there and come back, maybe. . .*
JOHNSON: I had to give up *Texas Slim* when I took up *Moon*, because it was just knocking me out. And of course, I got more money, so I could afford to. *Slim* didn't amount to a hill of beans—maybe $200 a week, plus Willard's stuff. . .
MARSCHALL: *Well, it was in the* Tribune, *I'm not sure how many other papers it was in then.*
JOHNSON: I think I had about 40 papers.
MARSCHALL: *When you started signing* Moon, *then, in 1958, did you want to change it, or were you asked not to rock the boat? I mean, it was practically your strip anyway.*
JOHNSON: I was told not to rock the boat at all. When Willard's name went off and mine went on, 25 papers dropped it!
MARSCHALL: *Really.*
JOHNSON: Yeah. That's what a name will do for you.
MARSCHALL: *Even though you had been practically doing it single-handed for 10 years anyway.*
JOHNSON: I think they figured that Moon *was kind of worn out. It had been around so damn long, it would be a good chance to get rid of it. A lot of them hung on, too.*
MARSCHALL: Moon *is one of the strips that through transition from the original artist to the new artist and over the decades, has kept some kind of real vitality. I mean,* Barney Google *did it. . .*
JOHNSON: Fred was good.
MARSCHALL: *He was good and he kept with the new premise, really. And I think* Gasoline Alley *when Dick Moores took it over, it was kind of a different strip, but it's. . .*
JOHNSON: It's still good.
MARSCHALL: *Yes.*
JOHNSON: Dick had a lot of experience. He had a strip or two of his own, with United, and he was out here working for Disney when Frank King was getting pretty old and he wanted somebody to take it over eventually, so Bill Perry came out. And we knew Dick in Chicago, when he worked with Chet Gould. He didn't get along with Gould very well; Gould said, "He was always telling me how to do the strip." He came out here and went to work for Disney, and that's where I saw him again. So Bill got him to go. . . and he did a very good job.
MARSCHALL: *Let me just mention one more strip,* Bringing Up Father, *which was a classic and has been going for years. But now it's in the 1980s and it's something of an anachronism. Jiggs wears spats and people don't look like that or act like that any more. What I want to ask you with* Moon Mullins—*a lot of the hobos and the stuff that was good humor back in the '20s and '30s has gone out of it, and you've added new things and new characters. . .*
JOHNSON: I try to keep it as modern as possible, still retain the first six characters, and I've added maybe six or so.
MARSCHALL: *Yeah, can you tell us about the characters that you've added?*
JOHNSON: Well. . . I guess Teddy of Teddy's Tavern.
MARSCHALL: *Based on Teddy Roosevelt, I mean, visually, anyway.*
JOHNSON: Started out looking like him. And Emmy went to work with a guy named Heartburn. That kind of modernized it a little bit, all the wives working.
MARSCHALL: *Yes.*
JOHNSON: And I got an artist in there called Doodle. And a professor who, you know, they're such a bunch of bums, they have an intellectual in there. Professor Byrd.
MARSCHALL: *And his daughter, right?*
JOHNSON: Yes. A couple of girls. His daughter was Mynah Byrd. . . and Swivel is my character. I guess there were others,

but I can't think of any. You use them for a while and drop them.

MARSCHALL: *What strikes me is that,* Moon Mullins *is one of the greatest premises for a comic—it's in a boarding house, so you're allowed to have characters come and go. You don't have to explain why they appear, or establish them too much. If they don't work out and leave, well, it's a boarding house.*

JOHNSON: I had a magician in for a while, and ran out of ideas. So I dropped him.

MARSCHALL: *Can you tell us about Tom's work on the strip, when he joined you? (Ferd's son Tom assists on* Moon Mullins *and shares credit.)*

JOHNSON: When he was in Korea, I was doing an advertising strip then called *Speedy.* And it was sold by some outfit in New York—the idea was, it's a regular strip, but in one of the balloons, I'd leave a place for a slug to put in where it was sold. They stuck that in. That was going pretty well for a while. When Tom was in Korea, I sent this stuff to him, and that's how he started working for me, because he had the time.

MARSCHALL: *Wait a minute, you were a professional cartoonist, but you sent the work by mail to a soldier in Korea to. . .*

JOHNSON: That's right. That was just advertising.

MARSCHALL: *Yeah, but I mean, he wasn't on the front obviously.*

JOHNSON: No, it was after the shooting.

MARSCHALL: *O.K., O.K.*

JOHNSON: They had him up in Monterey for a year, learning the Korean language, so that's why they sent him there. He wanted to go to Europe and stuff like that. He got over there, he's over a year and a half, I guess, maybe two years. Only chance he got to use it, they called him in one day to broadcast a ball game.

MARSCHALL: *A ball game?*

JOHNSON: After years of study of Korean. That's the army for you.

MARSCHALL: *Had he drawn before that?*

JOHNSON: Oh, yeah. He was just like me, through high school and all that stuff. When he came out, he went to Art Center School which is supposed to be the best school for that kind of stuff in the country. Later, they joined up with Parsons. I think they're over in Pasadena. That's still one of those schools that teach design. . . and a bunch of these automobile manufacturers come out, get stuff from the kids. And they're very good. He went through there, and he was going to be a commercial artist, but I talked him into working for me, because I was desperate and needed some help. In other words, I grew my own assistant!

MARSCHALL: *What year was that?*

JOHNSON: Graduated from Stanford in '54, he was in the army through '57. About '58.

MARSCHALL: *Right when you took it on full time.*

MARSCHALL: *So he's been with me a long time. Well, as he got to be able to do the stuff better than I could, I let him do it. Now I can't touch him. I let him do all the heads now, because he can do them better than I can!*

MARSCHALL: *But he doesn't just do the heads. Are the editor now, are you the boss?*

JOHNSON: Well, I write the strips.

MARSCHALL: *You write them.*

JOHNSON: And he does the Sunday page now, all by himself. I show up with stuff like that (indicates rough pencil drawings), a week's worth, and we go over them together, and he edits my stuff and I edit his.

GROTH: *I want to ask you some more about some of the early-day cartoonists. What was Chester Gould like?*

JOHNSON: He was a very wonderful guy, smart as hell, well-educated. We used to go out to Chet's house. . . For the last number of years that I'd seen him, it'd only be at conventions in Chicago, but we were very close before that. We worked on the same floor. He loved to play cards. He wasn't a crap shooter like some of us.

GROTH: *Did these guys have hobbies, Gray or Gould, outside of cartooning? Sports or. . .?*

JOHNSON: Gould had a farm. I was never out there, but they said it was quite something. I think he liked to farm, fiddle around that way. I'd never known him to chase dames or anything like that. He was married when I first knew him. I knew his father-in-law. He was sort of a rich guy, and started Chet

[The interview continues on page 33, after the portfolio of half-page *Texas Slim* strips immediately following.]

Texas Slim and Dirty Dalton
by Ferd Johnson
SCRAM, DALTON! YOU STILL SMELL LIKE VIOLETS!
DEUCES WILD CLUB
POW!
LISTEN, LOUSE—
DISGUSTING!
AW, PIPE DOWN, DALTON. HE'S TALKIN' ABOUT HIS HAND—NOT YOU.
SWELL. NOW MEBBY I'LL GET TO PLAY, TEXAS.
HOW DO YOU "SMELL NOW?" WAL—NOT SO GOOD, DIRTY.
GO WAY, DIRTY, OR S'HELP ME, AH'LL—
DON'T SHOVE ME AROUND, YOU HALF BAKED—
AH AIMS TO THANK YOU KINDLY, TEXAS. O.K., BOYS—DEAL ME IN—!
DEUCES WILD CLUB
TH' BOYS DOWN AT TH' DEUCES WILD CLUB CAN'T STAND THAT PEPPERMINT I GOT BREATH SO I TOOK A BATH WITH TH' OTHER NIGHT AND DECIDED TO GET INTO TH' GAME.
WOT, ANOTHER BATH, DIRTY! HOW COME?
THAT 'AROMA DE LA VIOLETTE" STUFF IS AWFUL! GIT AWAY!
TEXAS, THEY'S SOME THINGS YOU DON'T KID ABOUT. YOU DON'T MEAN THAT?
YAS AH DOES! WOT YA AIM TO DO ABOUT IT?
OUT SIDE, DALTON!
DOGGONE YOU, TEXAS SLIM, YO'RE NOTHIN' BUT A LOW DOWN FOOLIN' LIAR! YOU SAID I DIDN'T SMELL GOOD.
WAL, YOU DON'T-!
WAL, IT MAKES YOU SMELL MORE NATURAL!
NOW YOU'VE DID IT. THAT WAS A MEAN DIRTY TRICK, BUSTIN' A SACK OF FERTILIZER ALL OVER ME!

January 7, 1945

Texas Slim and Dirty Dalton

by Ferd Johnson

May 20, 1945

SHAKE YORE HIPS, CALAMITY! YOU'VE OVERSLEPT AGIN—IT'S PAST FIVE O'CLOCK.
OH FOH—!
NURSEMAIDIN' SIX HUNDRED COW IS TOO DANGED MUCH TO DO AN' I AIN'T A-GONNA STAND FOR IT.
GOOD RIDDANCE I CALLS IT. AH'LL GO TO TOWN AND GET ME A REAL WORKER.
ANY KIND OF WORK'LL DO, MISTER—IT'D BE A VACATION AFTER TH' JOB I'VE HAD.
JUST HAVE A SI THE NEXT ROOM I'LL GE I CAN
EMPLOYMENT A
YOU ARE A LUCKY LADY. PLEASANT WORK—GOOD WAGES AND EASY HOURS. YOU'D BETTER TAKE IT, IT'S ALL I HAVE TO OFFER.
WILL I! OH, BABY! THAT'S FOH ME.
CALAMITY?

Texas Slim and Dirty Dalton

by Ferd Johnson 9-30

September 30, 1945

TELEGRAM FOH AKERS! WOT'S IT SAY?
IT'S NONE OF OUR BUSINESS.
TH' HECK IT AIN'T, SLIM! MY NEPHEW, WHO AH AIN'T SEEN IN THUTY YEARS IS COMIN' FOH A VISIT. AND IT'S YOUR BUSINESS TO MEET HIM.
THERE TH' TR HOPE W BEATS ACROS TH' TRA
WELCOME TO TH' WEST, SUH!
HUH?
MISTER AKERS ASKED US TO PICK YOU UP.
SUPPER'LL BE READY WHEN WE GITS HOME.
SUPPE
I SEE YOU'D LIKE A BATH, SON—CALAMITY, RUN HIM A TUB! I'LL GIVE YOU SOME FRESH CLOTHES.
CLOTHES?
YOUSE COITAINLY IS A VERY CONSIDERATE PEOPLE HERE IN DE WEST.
FOHGET IT, SON JES' A SAMPLE OF GREAT WESTE HOSPITALI WE'RE NOT FOH.

YOU AND
WS
WAL, TRY SITTIN'.
I'M QUITTIN'!
SEE IF AH CARE. AH'LL HIRE ME FOUR OR FIVE GUYS THAT'LL DO YORE WORK EASY AS PIE.
EAT IN
M, MAM.
E WHAT
N DO.
GENCY
EMPLOYMENT AGENCY.
YER GOOD WAGES··PLEASANT WORK·· EASY HOURS.
ONE MOMENT, PLEASE.
EMPLOYMENT
AKERS!
BAH! ONLY ONE COWBOY IN TOWN FOH HIRE, AND IT HAS TO BE YOU.
YOU SHOULD SQUAWK! LOOK WOT I PULLED OUTTA TH' GRAB BAG FOH A BOSS.
E'S
AIN.
VE
IT
SS
CKS.
WHO CARES- JES' SO IT'S NOT A TIE.
THAT MUST BE HIM- HE'S TH' ONLY ONE TO GET OFF.
HIM? BUT HE LOOKS LIKE A BUM. AND HE WUZ RIDIN' TH' RODS.
AW, TRAVELIN' CONDITIONS IS TOUGH NOW. YO'RE LUCKY TO GIT A SEAT ANY PLACE.
YEH, DIRTY- THAT'S RIGHT.
HEY!
R?
HERE HE IS, MR. AKERS.
MY BOY! MY BOY! WELCOME TO DOUBLE CROSS RANCH!
Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.
Copyright, 1948, by The Chicago Tribune.
UGH!
TH
RN
TY
ED
ANOTHER TELEGRAM, MR. AKERS.
?
AKERS
DOUBLE CROSS RANCH
WAYOUTWEST
DEAR UNCLE, MISSED TRAIN- WONT ARRIVE UNTIL TOMORROW.
YOUR LOVING NEPHEW.
SCRAM, BUM! AND DONT COME BACK!
WELL, OF ALL THINGS!

March 17, 1946

Texas Slim and Dirty Dalton
by Ferd Johnson
3-17
RECKON THEY'LL EVER REPLACE TH' COW PONY, DIRTY?
NOT TILL THEY LEARN 'EM TO EAT GRASS, TEXAS
MY! LOOK AT THOSE HANDSOME COWBOYS.
THERE MUST BE SOME WAY WE CAN MEET THEM, MAMA.
THERE IS, SISTER DEAR.
GOLLY, DIRTY- AH NEVER KNOWED YO' COULD RIDE ONE OF THEM THINGS.
AH CAN'T, BUT NOW'S NO TIME FOH DETAILS.
HANG ON, LADY- HERE AH COME!
POP! BANG! R-R-R-R
OH, GOOD GRIEF!
POP!
BAM!
BAM!
WOT TH-?
R-R-R-R-R
SPLAS
Reg U. S. Pat. Off.
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May 26, 1946

Texas Slim and Dirty Dalton
by Ferd Johnson
SOME WIND, TEXAS.
YEH- WISH IT'D BLOW SOME CUSTOMERS OUR WAY.
MRS SHIELDS ROADSIDE DUDE-TOURIST CAMP
OH FOH-!
YO' LOWER ME DOWN IN TH' BUCKET SO'S AH KIN REACH IT.
6HO'.
O.K., DIRTY, AH GOT IT- HOIST AWAY.
O.K.
HONK!
-ER JES' A MINUTE, TEXAS.
FOLLOW TH' LEADER, FOLK'S.
526
WELL WATER! IS IT PURE?
WE'RE PARTICULAR ABOUT THE WATER WE DRINK.
IT'S TH' PUREST HEREABOUTS, MA'AM — WAL WOT TH-?
WAL, IT'S ABOUT TIME, DIRTY!

EEK!
WAK!
HELP!
MY SISTER'S HORSE HAS RUN AWAY!
WE'LL SAVE HER, MISS. GIMME A PUSH, TEXAS.
DON'T GET EXCITED MA'AM - AH'LL GRAB HIM NEXT TIME AROUND
R-R-R BANG!
NOW HE REALLY IS RUNNING AWAY!
HELP!
I'M COMIN'!
POP!
BAM!
H!
GOOD GOSH! WOT WILL TH' MAN SAY WHEN HE SEES HIS MOTOR-CYCLE AT TH' BOTTOM OF THAT SWIMMIN' POOL?
?
LISTEN, DIRTY - DON'T ASK ME SUCH THINGS - YOU KNOW AH PROMISED MY MOTHER AH'D NEVER, NEVER SAY THOSE KIND OF WORDS!
PATIENCE AND FORTITUDE, TEXAS.
IT LANDED IN TH' WELL. LEND ME A HAND WILLYA, DIRTY?
SOME CUSTOMERS COME.
YO' KIN SIGN TH' REGISTER RIGHT IN HERE WITH MRS. SQUEECH, FOLKS.
MAY WE HAVE A DRINK OF WATER FIRST?
WE'RE SIMPLY DEHIDRATED.
OF COURSE, MR. DALTON WILL SEE TO IT.
D GOSH, TEXAS - AH FOHGOT L ABOUT YO' SOAKIN' OWN THERE — SAY, PILE OUT. TH' FOLKS WANT A DRINK.
B-ERLP!
OH-NO!
WAL, MAKE UP YER MINDS, WILLYA? DO YOU OR DON'TCHA WANT A DRINK?

Texas Slim and Dirty Dalton

by Ford Johnson

June 30, 1946

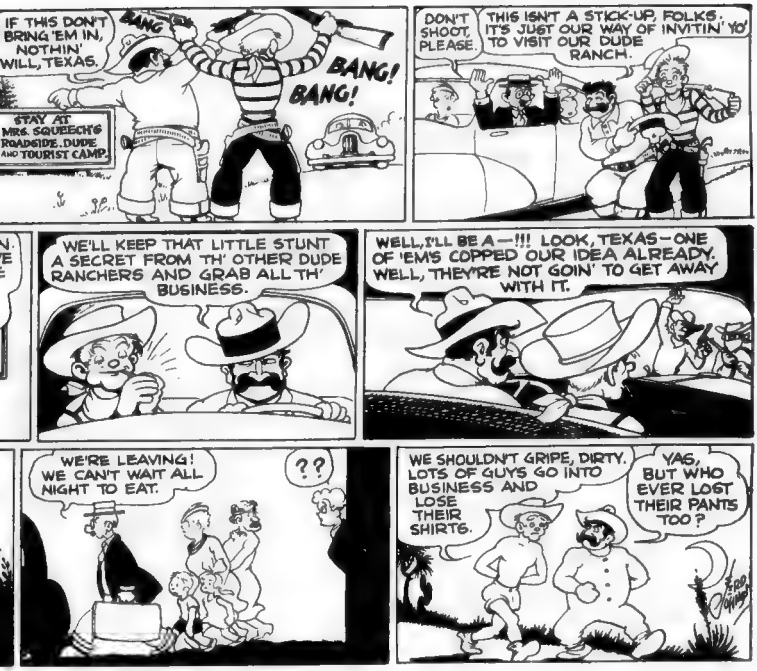
DON'T BE ALARMED, SUNNY, THIS IS JUST A LITTLE ADVERTISIN' CAMPAIGN WE COOKED UP FOH MRS. SQUEECH.
OH BOY! REAL WILD COWBOYS
LET'S STOP POP.
-ER WELL, WE WERE LOOKING FOR ACCOMMODATIONS!
WE'LL 'COMMODATE YO', SUH- GRAB THEIR BAGGAGE, TEXAS.
WE HIT TH' JACK POT THAT TIME, MRS SQUEECH. SHALL WE TRY AGAIN.
NOT NOW, MR. DALTON YOU'LL HAVE TO DRIV TO TOWN FOR SOME GROCERIES SO WE CAN FEED THOSE FOLKS.
SO! YOU'RE TRYIN' TO STEAL OUR STUFF, 'EY?
WAL, NOW, PARD, HOW'D YA GUESS?
THIS BUGGY'LL COME IN HANDY.
YEH. AND THESE SOUVENIRS WILL KEEP THEM PUNKS FROM SPREADIN' TH' WORD TOO FAST, FELIX.

Texas Slim and Dirty Dalton

by Ford Johnson

September 8, 1946

HOW COME MRS. SQUEECH IS ADVERTISIN' FOH A NEW COOK, DIRTY?
SHE SAID MY NAME, CONNECTED WITH HER KITCHEN, WASN'T EXACTLY A SELLING POINT, TEXAS.
WHOOPS! AH'VE FOUND IT- AT TH' "BAR-NOTHING". SO LONG, AKERS!
WANT ADS
PHOOEY! WOTTA I CARE.
GOOD MORNING, CALAMITY. A GUEST CHECKED IN LATE LAST NIGHT AND LEFT A REQUEST FOR AN EARLY BREAKFAST.
A BREAKFUST? SAY, HE'S ORDERED THREE ALREADY.
MY GOODNESS! IMAGINE ANYONE LIKIN' MY COOKIN' THAT MUCH. WONDER WOT HE LOOKS LIKE----? AH'LL BET ROMANTIC!


IF THIS DON'T BRING 'EM IN, NOTHIN' WILL, TEXAS.
BANG
BANG!
BANG!
STAY AT MRS. SQUEECH'S ROADSIDE, DUDE AND TOURIST CAMP.
DON'T SHOOT, PLEASE.
THIS ISN'T A STICK-UP, FOLKS. IT'S JUST OUR WAY OF INVITIN' YO' TO VISIT OUR DUDE RANCH.
WE'LL KEEP THAT LITTLE STUNT A SECRET FROM TH' OTHER DUDE RANCHERS AND GRAB ALL TH' BUSINESS.
WELL, I'LL BE A—!!! LOOK, TEXAS—ONE OF 'EM'S COPPED OUR IDEA ALREADY. WELL, THEY'RE NOT GOIN' TO GET AWAY WITH IT.
WE'RE LEAVING! WE CAN'T WAIT ALL NIGHT TO EAT.
??
WE SHOULDN'T GRIPE, DIRTY. LOTS OF GUYS GO INTO BUSINESS AND LOSE THEIR SHIRTS.
YAS, BUT WHO EVER LOST THEIR PANTS TOO?
FRED JOHNSON

NOW TO DOUBLE-CROSS RANCH:
UGH! AND YORE LOUSY COOKIN', CALAMITY!
YO' DON'T HAFTA EAT SO MUCH OF IT, AKERS.
OH, YAS AH DO! WINTER'S COMIN' ON, AND AH NEED PLENTY OF PADDIN' TO KEEP ME WARM. STIR UP SOME MORE PANCAKES!
BAH! AH'M TIRED OF LOOKIN' YOU AND PANCAKES IN TH' FACE--- IF AH COULD FIND ME ANOTHER JOB I'D--- I'D--??
JOBS, ITY.
THANKEE, MA'AM. I'LL START IN TH' MORNING.
UGH! MY COOKIN'S WORSE'N HERS.
OH BOY-WOT A DAY! AND TO THINK AH WON'T HAVE TO LOOK AT AKERS' UGLY FACE ONE MINUTE OF IT.
TROT IN ANOTHER ORDER, GAL.
AKERS!
TAKE YORE CHOICE, MRS. SQUEECH. WHO'S IT GONNA BE THAT GETS TOSSED OUT ON HIS EAR-THIS OL' COOT OR ME?
FRED JOHNSON

CAUSE & DEFECT...
ELEGANT! CANAPÉS BEFORE DINNER!
PEANUT BUTTER ON A CHEESE CRACKER?
IT'S NO CANAPÉ-- IT'S DINNER...
IT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU ALL GET BEHIND IN YOUR RENT.
ERD + TOM JOHNSON
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off in a home and all that stuff. Chet soon caught up with him! I'm sure he had to pay it back. I knew his daughters. I don't know where they are now. At that time they were teenagers.

GROTH: *Was Gray a ladies' man at all?*

JOHNSON: Yeah, he chased. He had an affair going with some dame at the office. It was taboo. Somebody at the syndicate. She's older than hell now. I guess it's O.K. to tell now (chuckle).

GROTH: *Was Gray married early?*

JOHNSON: He was married and split up, or something. (*Ed. note: He was widowed in 1925.*) Lived out in Lombard. And then later on he met a gal that sold tickets in a movie theater, married her and she was wonderful.

MARSCHALL: *Winifred.*

JOHNSON: Yeah. And they came out here. I didn't know her very well, except I knew I liked her. She was very nice.

MARSCHALL: *Walter Berndt (*Smitty*) used to tell me stories that he and Gray—Berndt, he lived in Port Jeff, Long Island, and Harold Gray was in Connecticut, in Westport or Southport—and, I don't know if it's true, but they used to go back and forth between each other's places, across the Sound.*

JOHNSON: Could be. Fishing.

MARSCHALL: *Yes, fishing, doing stuff together, but also climbing into each other's windows and playing practical jokes and like that.*

JOHNSON: I knew Berndt but not too well. He was in New York, we were in Chicago, he'd come out there once in a while. I liked *Smitty*.

MARSCHALL: *As long as we're back again in the old days, we haven't asked what he was like personally, but this guy was really as important as any cartoonist, I think, in the history of comics—Captain Patterson. You said he had an instinct, he came up with names for characters, he developed strips. What was he like personally? Was he funny? Was he all business?*

JOHNSON: He was brilliant, but I don't think especially funny. He would come down to the office when we were there and put his feet up on the desk, about once a week and discuss ideas. Sometimes make suggestions. He would always want to know what we were doing. And he would say he liked it or didn't like it. He went around to all the guys that way.

MARSCHALL: *Did he have favorites? Did he play favorites with the cartoonists?*

JOHNSON: Willard was one.

MARSCHALL: *Willard was?*

JOHNSON: Yeah, he loved Willard. In the New York *News* he put him right on the front page. And then Chet came along!

GROTH: *Did you know any women cartoonists?*

JOHNSON: Dale Messick.

GROTH: *Dale Messick. About the only one?*

JOHNSON: There was another one, Edwina. I didn't know her, but I think those were the only two in the business then.

GROTH: *Why do you think cartooning was such a male profession?*

JOHNSON: Well, mainly, I think it's because it was a pretty rough bunch around art departments and stuff like that—boozing around. I don't think it's very lady-like. But Dale is the first one I know to break in to our outfit. Now there are some that are whizzes at it. The Johnston dame, I think she's great (Lynn Johnston, of *For Better or For Worse*). And *Cathy* is . . . popular. (laughter) But the drawing, I can't say . . . I don't read these strips, especially those that have fine print. I've had trouble with my eyes, I've just got them fixed—cataracts, and I went through all that, but they're all right now.

GROTH: *Sounds like you keep up with strips, though, pretty well.*

JOHNSON: Yeah, I know what's going on. That's the only objection I have to *Nemo*, this fine print. It's hard. I can read it, but it's a strain.

MARSCHALL: *We've got to do a large-print edition.*

JOHNSON: For old folks!

MARSCHALL: *No, when we chose the type, it was just to cram more into the magazine. I want to ask you about somebody that I always thought was a woman cartoonist because of drawing style and the name. Penny Ross. Did you know Penny Ross in Chicago? Did a thing for* Tribune *called* Momma's Angel Child.

JOHNSON: Nope! How old are you?! I thought I'm the oldest cartoonist in the business. Started out to be the youngest and now it's vice-versa.

MARSCHALL: *I guess he left the* Tribune *around 1920 because he became a ghost to Outcault, the last couple of years of* Buster Brown . . .

GROTH: *Was there a sense of fraternity among the cartoonists then—go out and drink and such . . .*

JOHNSON: Yeah, maybe they were rivals in business, but you get them together in New York and they're all pals. I used to get back for Christmas every year. Reached the point where it was about $2,000 dollars for a hangover, with the transportation, the hotel rooms.

MARSCHALL: *Do you do rough continuities in the strip any more? Or just gag-a-day?*

JOHNSON: Two or three at a time.

MARSCHALL: *Is that a syndicate edict, or is it just something you thought was good?*

JOHNSON: No, I just think the gags are easier. I don't like continuity. I just can't read something, have it just stop, and have to wait until the next day to go on. Cliffhangers are okay, I guess, if they get your curiosity up. But a lot of them just stop.

GROTH: *Did you enjoy the adventure strips,* Flash Gordon *and* Buck Rogers *and those?*

JOHNSON: Caniff . . . those were great. I don't read them much any more, but in the early days.

GROTH: *Did you like Roy Crane's work?*

JOHNSON: Yes. I used to like that.

GROTH: *Did you know Crane at all?*

JOHNSON: No. Just from those meetings in New York.

GROTH: *Did you have any sense of what he was like?*

JOHNSON: Very quiet, business-like. He didn't look to me like he had any imagination, but you *know* he did.

MARSCHALL: *The* Tribune *started a whole new group of strips around 1934 or so. And that's including* Terry and the Pirates. *Gaar Williams'* Strain on the Family Tie, *the Sunday page; the* Teenie Weenie *Sunday page, and Zack Mosley's strip,* Smilin' Jack, *and everything. Were you pretty much out of Chicago at that point, or did you know that bunch when they came around?*

JOHNSON: I knew them pretty well, and when we moved to Connecticut, then we were pretty close to them.

MARSCHALL: *You lived in Connecticut for a while?*

JOHNSON: Yes.

MARSCHALL: *Where did you live?*

JOHNSON: Stamford. Three years in a hotel there. New Canaan for one winter. The only place we could get, we went back there in '45, after the War, and we spent the summer in a hotel room. No air conditioning, it was just horrible. Maybe that's how I grew to dislike New York, although I enjoyed it.

GROTH: *Did the train run from Stamford to New York then?*

Father, son, and holy terror—Kayo Mullins betwixt Ferd Johnson and his son Tom, who is full collaborator on the production of daily and Sunday *Moon Mullins*.

JOHNSON: Yeah. And then we moved, we found a place in New Canaan. It was a dream place, at least it was in the Fall. But I forgot about the Winter, and it was a Summer place. Boy, I never burned so much oil in my life. It was fun . . . except when Willard called me at 11 o'clock during a snowstorm, snow up to your tail.

MARSCHALL: *Where was he then?*

JOHNSON: He was up there, too. About a mile away. That's where he really did his heavy drinking. We had a place to work up in the attic, and all around were bookcases. Just about a thousand books in there. So he'd get the booze in, hide them behind the books, because his wife was really watching. That was *one* reason we worked all night. She was asleep. He'd kill a quart, maybe, a bottle of gin a night. I didn't touch the stuff. I'd learned that *somebody* had to stay awake. And come the morning I was the one—I'd get rid of the bottles, the empties, slip them in my pocket, as soon as I got out of the house, toss them in a snowbank. Come Spring, there was a glass fence (laughter) of bottles.

GROTH: *Cartoonists seem unusually prone to drink.*

JOHNSON: Well, they can afford it and they have the time.

GROTH: *Do you think there's something in the profession that disposes them to do it?*

JOHNSON: It used to be worse than that. Sid Smith and Frank King were in the art department, in the *Tribune*. And King didn't do it, but I know Sid did, and Briggs, they all got stinking, and missed deadlines, but they were all in one paper. Didn't matter much. But as soon as they started syndicating, they had to produce.

MARSCHALL: *That's when ghosts and assistants came in. Maybe* why.

JOHNSON: There was a saloon in New Canaan called Izzy's that

wallpapered the whole place with characters from *Moon Mullins*. All the characters blown up. That was his favorite hangout.

MARSCHALL: *We've got to check that out. Gary moved here from Stamford, and I moved from Westport. So we're both Connecticut expatriates.*

JOHNSON: Well, when the good weather came, the people that owned the house wanted it, so we went down to Stamford, the Roger Smith Hotel—do you know that one?

GROTH: *Yeah.*

JOHNSON: We were there three years. We had two rooms.

MARSCHALL: *Well, I've got you through the Tom Johnson era, and I guess my final question is—if you're ever planning to get tired doing comic strips?*

JOHNSON: Well, I have four grandchildren that have to go through college, so I'm hoping to hang on five or six more years!

MARSCHALL: *Do you still enjoy it, though?*

JOHNSON: Oh, yeah, sure. It's an easy thing to do. I mean, the drawing's a cinch. Just the ideas are the hangups. I suffer on those. Sometimes they come easy, but most of the time they don't. Sometimes I can do the whole week in two hours, and sometimes it's two or three days to get those silly little things in. I read an awful lot, try to pick up stuff in columns that would suggest anything. I have to generally sit down in a corner by myself and just sweat them out. I wish I could take shorthand or something. I see comedy shows, because there's always things when I think, "Gee, I could use that," but I forget them.

GROTH: *Do you get a great deal of personal satisfaction from drawing the strip and writing it?*

JOHNSON: Yeah, when things are going good, I like it very much. I only have to come down here to the studio about three hours a day. Come down in the morning and then go home. I paint, that's my recreation.

GROTH: *Are all these your paintings (on the walls)?*

JOHNSON: Yes. I had two or three very good years. People were buying paintings, but now they're buying prints. It's tough on the guys. And the galleries would rather have prints, because it's enormously profitable. They can buy a print for under a $100, put a frame on it, get $1,000 for it. And mostly, our stuff, we work our tails off for a month. And they get 50%. I sold one this year.

GROTH: *Let me ask you something else, looking back over your career, do you think you were treated well by the syndicates?*

JOHNSON: I had to speak up to get some money out of them. Because when Willard died the big money was still coming in.

GROTH: *Were you able to negotiate with the syndicate in terms of price and rights and benefits and so forth?*

JOHNSON: No rights. They owned everything. Now I understand they'll let the artists have the rights.

GROTH: *Sometimes.*

MARSCHALL: *It's changing a bit, yeah.*

GROTH: *Well, how did you feel about not being able to, having a little play there, a little leeway in terms of what you were. . .*

JOHNSON: Frustrated.

MARSCHALL: *How many papers are you in now?*

JOHNSON: About a hundred. The trouble is, we were always in big papers before—*L.A. Times* and that kind of stuff, and when they dropped it, they were paying $75 a week for it. Well, they probably pay three times that now for the strips. And then they had all those territories. When these small towns picked it up, they were paying six dollars, ten dollars, that kind of stuff. I think the syndicate's still breaking even or making a buck on it, or I wouldn't be here.

GROTH: *Is merchandizing lucrative at all?*

JOHNSON: Not at all for *Moon*.

GROTH: *Right.*

JOHNSON: We used to do stuff like this (pointing to merchandising items around the studio). Suspenders, the "Kayo" drink. That was a sad story. Back in about '25, I think I went to New Orleans, all the way from Chicago to New Orleans, I saw these signs—Kayo drinks. Well, I knew it was big, and I got back and told Willard about it. He didn't know anything about it. He accused the business manager he had, who called me a liar, said there's no such thing. Well, they finally came up and got Willard drunk and he signed a contract—let them have the rights for 25 bucks. It's still going there, and it's a million-dollar thing now.

GROTH: *For God's sake!*

MARSCHALL: *The syndicate did this?*

JOHNSON: No, no, no. The people with. . .

MARSCHALL: *The beverage company.*

JOHNSON: Yeah.

GROTH: *What scum!*

JOHNSON: Well, there was nothing that could be done. They used his characters. . .

GROTH: *Even though he signed the contract essentially under duress, when he was plastered? He couldn't. . .?*

JOHNSON: He didn't want to. I asked the syndicate about it, and they tried it and they said, "No, he signed away the rights."

MARSCHALL: *How was* he *able to sign away the rights?? The syndicate owned the strip, didn't it?*

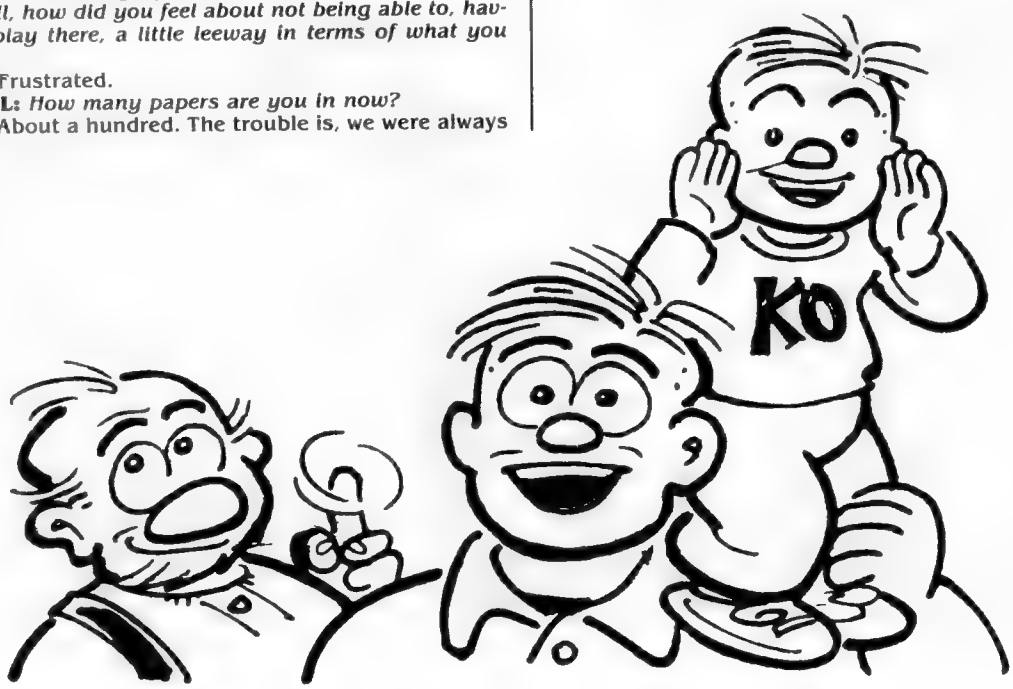
JOHNSON: Owned the strip, but I think he had the rights. But there were comic books, and Big Little Books, and a couple of movie contracts that didn't pan out, but he got paid for them. . . The first guy they wanted to play Kayo was Mickey Rooney— he was a cute little kid then. . .

MARSCHALL: *Yeah, he's still a cute little thing. People talk about* Moon Mullins *through the years, I remember a lot of the little incidental things, like Kayo sleeping at night in the bureau drawer. Did you dream up any of that stuff?*

JOHNSON: That was Willard's. But the minute he spotted it, I said keep that up, because that's *good*.

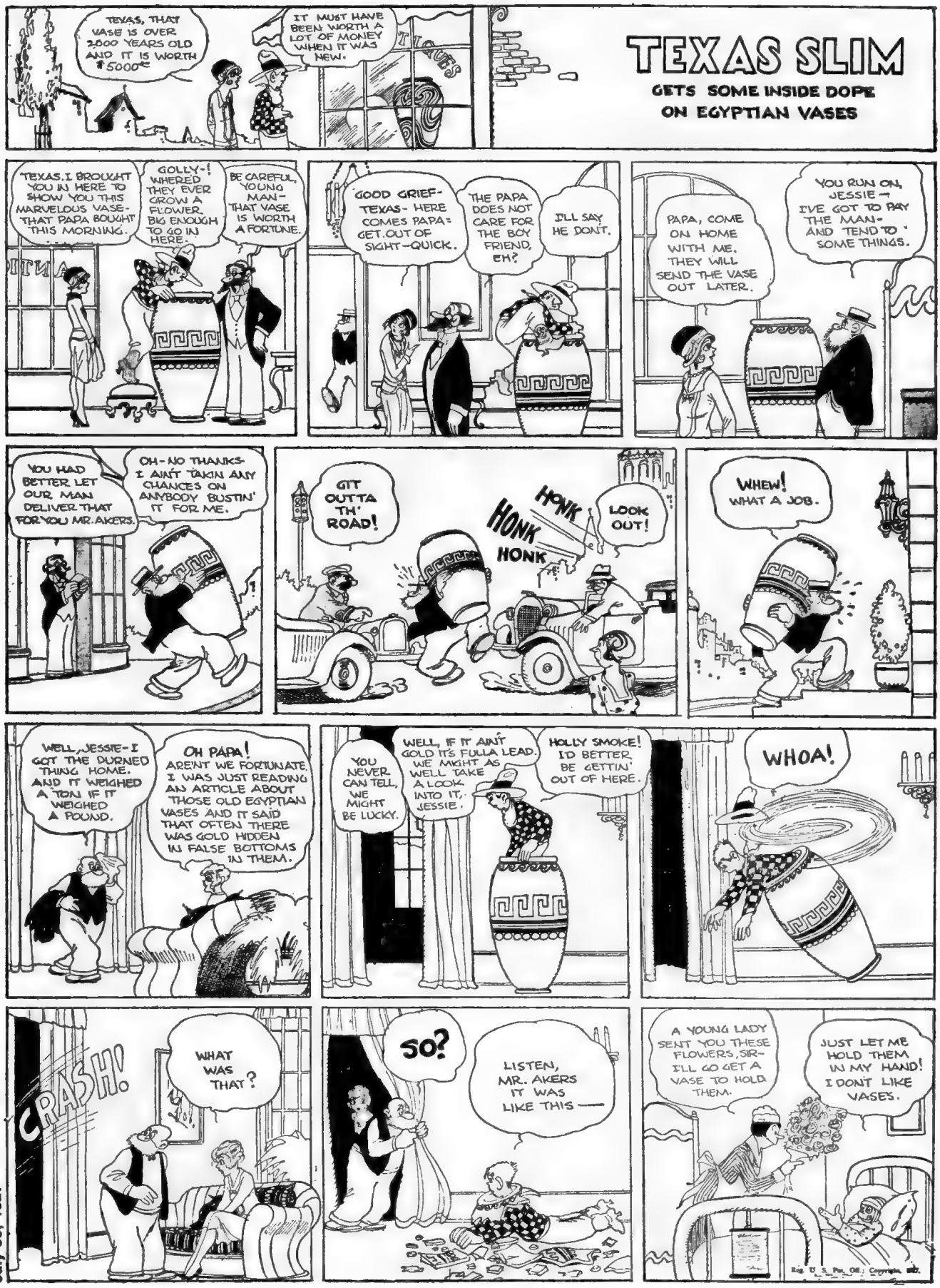
MARSCHALL: *Yeah.*

JOHNSON: Fans still talk about it. They want to know why I don't do it. Well, I do it as often as I can. Some of the old stuff is fun. **n**



R.R. STATION
WELCOME TO OUR CITY
"THAT LETS ME OUT" SAID
TEXAS SLIM
AS HE JUMPED THOUGH THE WINDOW
I DONT SEE WHY YOU WANTED TO STARTLETTING THE DOCTOR GIVE YOU TREATMENTS THE FIRST DAY WE GET IN TOWN, DADDY. TEXAS IS GOING TO SHOW ME A WONDERFUL TIME WITH THE $500. HE RECEIVED FROM RAILROAD COMPANY LAST WEEK— HE WANTS TO TAKE ME TO A MOVIE TONIGHT.
I ALWAYS KNEW YOUD FALL FOR SOME SAP WITH MONEY, JESSIE — COME ON WE'RE LATE NOW.
HOSPITAL
SO THIS IS THE HOSPITAL JESSIE PHONED ME TO MEET HER AT?
DID THE DOCTOR ORDER A ROOM FOR MR. M. AKERS OF CHEYENNE, WYOMING?
YES SIR— ROOM 444 SIR— FOURTH DOOR TO YOUR LEFT.
DR. SAWANSTITCH'S NEW PATIENT IS IN ROOM 444.
OH YES- HE SPOKE TO ME ABOUT THIS CASE.
AND NOW, YOUNG MAN WHERE WERE YOU BORN? MARRIED, OR SINGLE?
SAY THAT AIN'T NONE A YOUR BUSINESS.
COME, COME. WE CAN'T STAND HERE ARGUIN' ALL DAY—
—DOC'S IN A HURRY.
HEY! LEGGO MY LAIG—
STRAP HIM DOWN, DAN. DOC SAID HE WAS A BIT DIPPY.
THOSE GUYS MUST BE MIXED UP WITH ONE OF THOSE GANG WARS I'VE READ ABOUT.
AKERS IS MY NAME, YOUNG FELLER— IS DR. SAWANSTITCH HERE YET?
THE NURSE JUST STEPPED OUT BUT I'LL SEE IF THEY'RE READY FOR YOU, MR. AKERS.
GOOD GRIEF! THEY JUST PHONED UP THAT THAT GUY AKERS IS DOWNSTAIRS AGAIN.
TELL THEM TO SEND HIM UP—
AND TURN OUT TH' LIGHTS.
ANY BODY HERE! SHALL I COME RIGHT ON IN?
COME RIGHT ON IN
KNOCK KNOCK
SOCK!
ERD JOHNSON
GOOD HEAVENS, DADDY - I CANT UNDERSTAND HOW THEY CAN CURE RHEUMATISM BY PUTTIN THOSE LUMPS ON YOUR HEAD AND THAT BLACK EYE -
I GUESS THEY GIVE ME THE WRONG TREATMENT. JESSIE AND FROM THE WAY THEY APOLOGIZED I THINK I'LL SEND TEXAS BACK AND SEE WHAT LUCK HE HAS COLLECTING DAMAGES FROM THAT OUTFIT.

May 21, 1927


TEXAS, THAT VASE IS OVER 2000 YEARS OLD AND IT IS WORTH $5000.00
IT MUST HAVE BEEN WORTH A LOT OF MONEY WHEN IT WAS NEW.
TEXAS SLIM
GETS SOME INSIDE DOPE ON EGYPTIAN VASES
TEXAS, I BROUGHT YOU IN HERE TO SHOW YOU THIS MARVELOUS VASE- THAT PAPA BOUGHT THIS MORNING.
GOLLY-! WHERE'D THEY EVER GROW A FLOWER BIG ENOUGH TO GO IN HERE.
BE CAREFUL, YOUNG MAN- THAT VASE IS WORTH A FORTUNE.
GOOD GRIEF- TEXAS- HERE COMES PAPA- GET OUT OF SIGHT-QUICK.
THE PAPA DOES NOT CARE FOR THE BOY FRIEND, EH?
I'LL SAY HE DON'T.
PAPA, COME ON HOME WITH ME. THEY WILL SEND THE VASE OUT LATER.
YOU RUN ON, JESSIE- I'VE GOT TO PAY THE MAN- AND TEND TO SOME THINGS.
YOU HAD BETTER LET OUR MAN DELIVER THAT FOR YOU MR. AKERS.
OH- NO THANKS- I AIN'T TAKIN ANY CHANCES ON ANYBODY BUSTIN' IT FOR ME.
GIT OUTTA TH' ROAD!
HONK
HONK
HONK
LOOK OUT!
WHEW! WHAT A JOB.
WELL, JESSIE- I GOT THE DURNED THING HOME. AND IT WEIGHED A TON IF IT WEIGHED A POUND.
OH PAPA! ARE'NT WE FORTUNATE I WAS JUST READING AN ARTICLE ABOUT THOSE OLD EGYPTIAN VASES AND IT SAID THAT OFTEN THERE WAS GOLD HIDDEN IN FALSE BOTTOMS IN THEM.
YOU NEVER CAN TELL, WE MIGHT BE LUCKY.
WELL, IF IT AIN'T GOLD IT'S FULLA LEAD. WE MIGHT AS WELL TAKE A LOOK INTO IT, JESSIE.
HOLLY SMOKE! I'D BETTER BE GETTIN' OUT OF HERE.
WHOA!
CRASH!
WHAT WAS THAT?
SO?
LISTEN, MR. AKERS IT WAS LIKE THIS —
A YOUNG LADY SENT YOU THESE FLOWERS, SIR- I'LL GO GET A VASE TO HOLD THEM.
JUST LET ME HOLD THEM IN MY HAND! I DON'T LIKE VASES.
Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.: Copyright, 1927.

July 30, 1927

TEXAS SLIM
IS ALL WET
HAVE YOU SEEN A COLLAR BUTTON AROUND HERE, OFFICER?
DIRTY, SINCE I WON THE BRONCO BUSTIN' CONTEST AT THE RODEO I THINK I'LL BUY SOME SWELL STORE CLOTHES SO I CAN TAKE JESSIE TO THE THEATER TONIGHT.
I KNOW A SWELL STORE THAT'LL FIX YOU UP, TEXAS.
AND LOOK AT THAT PERFECT FIT— I SOLD THE PRINCE OF WHALES A SUIT FROM THE SAME GOODS.
WELL, WRAP UP MY OLD ONE, MISTER— I'LL GIVE IT TO SOME ONE WHO NEEDS IT WORSE THAN I DO.
HERE, MY GOOD MAN— YOU MAY HAVE MY OLD SUIT— I WON'T NEED IT ANY MORE.
TANKS, MISTER. FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART I TANK YOUSE.
DEAF DUMB
WELL OF ALL THINGS— AND EVER SINCE I WAS A LITTLE BOY I'VE ALWAYS WANTED A COWBOY SUIT.
GEE- WHIZ! IT'S POURING CATS AND DOGS— I'D TAKE A STREET CAR, BUT I CAN'T AFFORD IT AFTER BLOWING ALL THAT MONEY—$18.00 THAT'S A LOT OF DOUGH.
HELLO, JESSIE— HOW DO YOU LIKE THIS LAYOUT.
GOOD HEAVENS—! OH!!
HAHAHA—! THAT SUIT HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!! WHERE IN THE WORLD DID YOU GET SUCH A THING?
WHAT'S TH' MATTER WITH IT?
LOOK AT IT. JUST LOOK AT IT IN THE GLASS.
GOSH! IT MUST OF SHRUNK.
I KNOW YOU WOULDN'T THINK OF TAKING ME TO THE THEATER LOOKING LIKE THAT, TEXAS.
OH, NO— I SUPPOSE NOT.
I'LL SAY SHES GOT A LOT OF NERVE TELLING ME TO TAKE THIS OTHER TICKET TO DIRTY DALTON SO HE CAN TAKE HER TO THE THEATER—
HMMM— RATHER NIFTY AT THAT—AND A PERFECT FIT.
?
BUT I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T HAVE NO MORE USE FOR DAT UNIFORM.
THATS WHAT I THOUGHT TOO—
OLIVER O. JOHNSON
Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.: Copyright, 1927,

August 27, 1927

BUT, OFFICER – YOU CAN'T PINCH ME FOR SPEEDING – WHY I WAS BARELY CREEPING ALONG
SURE – I KNOW – YOU WERE BLOCKING THE TRAFFIC.
TEXAS SLIM
FINDS JESSIE HARD TO KEEP UP WITH
CHARLIE'S
25¢, SIR.
I GUESS YOU'LL HAVE TO PUT THOSE BANANAS BACK ON THE BUNCH, MISTER. I LEFT MY MONEY WITH MY GIRL LAST NIGHT FOR SAFE KEEPING.
GOLLY I HAVEN'T EVEN GOT A DIME FOR STREET CAR FARE – I'LL HAVE TO BUM A RIDE UP TO JESSIE'S PLACE.
GOING NORTH?
YEH! I'M GOING TO 5500 AND BRYN MAWR – WHERE MY GIRL LIVES.
HERE WE ARE. SHALL I WAIT FOR YOU?
SURE. IF YOU WANT TO – I'LL BE GONE BUT A MINUTE.
IS JESSIE IN, MR. AKERS?
WHY, NO – TEXAS. SHE LEFT ABOUT AN HOUR AGO TO VISIT HER GIRL FRIEND.
WE MISSED HER. SHE'S AT HER GIRL FRIEND'S OUT IN THE COUNTRY.
DON'T WORRY WE'LL CATCH HER.
WELL – WE'RE FINALLY HERE I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
TAKE YOUR TIME.
I'M SORRY, SIR. SHE LEFT TOWN WITH THE MISTRESS – THEY ARE SPENDING THE WEEK END AT THEIR COTTAGE ON THE LAKE.
HECK!
SAY, BUDDIE – I GUESS YOU'LL HAVE TO PAY ME WHAT YOU OWE ME BEFORE WE START BACK – I'M OUT OF GAS AND I'LL HAVE TO BUY SOME.
GEE – AIN'T YOU GOT ANY MONEY EITHER?
SAY ——! WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT "EITHER" STUFF?
WELL YOU SEE IT'S LIKE THIS
GOLLY – I DON'T KNOW HOW WE'RE GOING TO GET BACK TO TOWN
WELL I DO.
GIDDAP! MAKE IT SNAPPY.
?
HERB JOHNSON

September 3, 1927

TEXAS SLIM
PUTS THE 'SPECIAL IN SPECIAL DELIVERY
SPECIAL FOR YOU MR. POPOVER.
U.S. MAIL
TEXAS, WOULD YOU MIND MAILING THIS LETTER FOR ME TO MR. POPOVER? YOU'D BETTER PUT A SPECIAL STAMP ON IT AS I WANT HIM TO GET IT TODAY
SURE MR. AKERS.
LET'S SEE - IF THIS LETTER'S IMPORTANT I'D BETTER DELIVER IT MYSELF AND DO THE OLD BOY A FAVOR - HIS ADDRESS IS ONLY 6 BLOCKS DOWN THE STREET.
U.S. MAIL
GOLLY, THAT'S A BIG BUILDING. I WONDER WHAT WINDOW BELONGS TO MR. POPOVER.
THE ELEVATORS ARE OUTTA ORDER, KID.
THAT'S ALL RIGHT I DON'T MIND WALKING UP. IT'S ONLY 17 FLOORS TO MR. POPOVER'S OFFICE
THIS ELEVATOR SERVICE IS A FRIGHT
WHEW— WHAT A CLIMB! I FEEL LIKE A BALLOON WITH NO AIR IN IT
HEY WHAT TH—?
?
I'M SORRY; CAN I DO ANYTHING FOR YOU, SIR?
YES— STEP UP A BIT CLOSER.
GOOD GOLLY I MUST OF HURT THE OLD FELLOWS FEELINGS,—THE WAY HE POKED ME IN THE EYE. I'LL FOLLOW HIM UP AND APOLOGIZE WHEN MY HEAD CLEARS UP.
AND I WANT YOU TO TELL THE DOOR MAN IF THAT IDIOT EVER SHOWS UP IN THIS BUILDING AGAIN TO PUT HIM IN THE HOSPITAL FOR GOOD.
?
YES SIR, MR. POPOVER.
MR. POPOVER! WHY THAT'S WHO I'M TRYING TO DELIVER THIS LETTER TO.
OH WELL. WHO AM I THAT I SHOULD INTERFERE WITH THE UNITED STATES MAIL!
U.S. MAIL
Reg. U. S. Pat. Office

September 17, 1927

TEXAS SLIM
TOPS THE BILL
$500
OH FORGET ABOUT YOUR GETTING ROBBED OF THAT $500.00, TEXAS- THE CHANCES ARE YOU WILL NEVER GET IT BACK- LETS GO TO THE MOVIES AND GET IT OFF OF YOUR MIND
ALL RIGHT, JESSIE - LETS GO TO THE DAYDREAM- THEYRE SHOWING "THE HOLDUP OF THE PONY EXPRESS" THERE.
GOOD GRIEF ISN'T THAT THE BUM THAT STOLE YOUR MONEY, TEXAS?
SAY WAIT A MINUTE!
STAGE ENTRANCE
JUMPIN' JEMINY—! WHAT KIND OF A DUMP IS DIS ANYWAY?
WHERE IS TH' OTHER DOOR, KIDDO?
?
BEAT IT!
I BEG YOUR PARDON
I BEG YOUR PARDON
?!
PEEG!
BONG!
CUT THAT OUT!
YOU RUIN MY ACT!
BRAVO!
WOW!
GREAT
SWELL
WOW!
RUIN YOUR ACT? WHY YOU HALF BAKED HOT TAMALE- THOSE BOYS MADE YOUR ACT- THAT WAS THE FIRST BIG HAND YOU EVER GOT IN YOUR LIFE
-THE OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFE TIME, YOUNG MAN- YOUR FUTURE ASSURED. A SPLENDID CONTRACT-
WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO DO? WHY SIMPLY RUN ACROSS THE STAGE AS YOU DID TONIGHT AND TAKE A BELT ON THE NOSE TWICE A DAY-
I THINK IT'S PERFECTLY WONDERFUL, TEXAS, THE MANAGER OFFERING YOU SEVENTY-FIVE DOLLARS A WEEK TO GO ON THE STAGE - WHAT DID YOU TELL HIM?
I'M HOLDIN' OUT FOR A THOUSAND A WEEK-
BOB ONNISON

THE GUY THAT WROTE "THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME" SAID A MOUTHFUL
TEXAS SLIM
THINKS HE HAS A SOFT BERTH
A MR. AKERS AND HIS DAUGHTER WERE JUST HERE LOOKING AT A SUITE IN THE HOTEL, MR. HART.
YOU DON'T MEAN MR. AKERS, THE MILLIONAIRE COWMAN FROM WYOMING DO YOU, FOLEY
TEXAS, PAPA AND I ARE GOING TO GIVE UP OUR APARTMENT AND MOVE TO THE ST. CLARE HOTEL
GEE WHIZ THAT'S A SWELL PLACE, JESSIE.
I COULDN'T NEVER AFFORD TO LIVE THERE - IF I ONLY COULD FIGURE OUT SOME SCHEME TO BE AROUND SO I COULD SEE JESSIE OFTEN - BY GOLLY - I'VE GOT IT.
ARE YOU THE MANAGER, MISTER
I AM AND I HAVE BEEN EXPECTING TO SEE YOU, SIR - HART IS MY NAME AND I WILL BE PROUD TO HAVE YOU WITH US.
I WANT YOU TO BE COMFORTABLE, SIR - HERE, SMOKE THIS CIGAR WHILE I SHOW YOU AROUND.
THANKS!
I AM SURE YOU WILL BE COMFORTABLE IN THIS SUITE.
I REALLY DIDN'T EXPECT ANYTHING LIKE THIS.
AND WHAT ABOUT THE MEALS
WE HAVE THE VERY BEST CHEF IN TOWN IT IS ABOUT DINNER TIME - I WILL HAVE HIM PREPARE US SOME FOOD
YOUR CHEF CERTAINLY DID HIMSELF PROUD ON THIS MEAL MISTER MANAGER. I THINK I'LL STAY
LET US TALK BUSINESS LATER. I HAVE THREE THEATER TICKETS FOR TONIGHT I AM SURE YOU AND YOUR DAUGHTER WILL ENJOY THE SHOW.
MY DAUGHTER? WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO - KID ME?
WHY I THOUGHT I UNDERSTOOD THAT YOU HAD A DAUGHTER AND THAT SHE EXPECTED TO LIVE HERE WITH YOU.
I SHOULD SAY NOT - MY NAME'S SLIM. AND I CAME TO GET A JOB AS A BELL HOP.
OH - I SEE!
HELLO, TEXAS - HOW DO YOU LIKE THE HOTEL
NOT SO GOOD. NOT SO GOOD!
FERD JOHNSON
Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.; Copyright, 1928

January 14, 1928

TEXAS SLIM
LEARNS SOME OUTSTANDING FACTS ABOUT MR. AKERS
I DON'T SEE WHY OLD MAN AKERS IS GETTIN' SO UPSTAGE AND WON'T LET ME KEEP COMPANY WITH JESSIE JUST BECAUSE I'M HOPPIN' BELLS HERE IN THE HOTEL.
HELLO, JESSIE - I SAW YOUR PAW GO OUT SO I THOUGHT I'D COME IN-
WHY, TEXAS- PULL UP THE COUCH AND MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE. PAPA HAS GONE TO THE MOVIES.
OPEN THAT DOOR!
GOOD HEAVENS! THAT IS FATHER'S VOICE, TEXAS--
WHAT'S THE IDEA, JESSIE- KEEPIN' ME WAITIN' LIKE THAT.
OH, FATHER! I THOUGHT AT FIRST YOU WERE A BURGLAR. I AM SO AFRAID OF BURGLARS.
WELL, IF YOU'RE SO SCARED OF BURGLARS YOU OUGHTA HAVE SENSE ENOUGH TO KEEP THIS WINDOW CLOSED.
?
AND LOCKED.
THAT WAS A NARROW ESCAPE.
HO HUM I GUESS I'LL TURN IN, DAUGHTER.
WELL DON'T LET ME KEEP YOU UP.
WHEW - BUT IT WAS COLD OUT THERE
!
I WONDER WHAT THE OLD MAN WOULD SAY IF HE COULD SEE ME-
GET OUT OF HERE YOU
HASN'T THAT YOUNG FELLER TEXAS BROUGHT THAT STUFF FOR MY FOOT FROM THE DRUG STORE YET, JESSIE?
YES PAPA- HE'S HERE NOW- WON'T YOU SIT DOWN, TEXAS.
I CAN'T
FERD JOHNSON

February 11, 1928

THREATS AND THRILLS, FANTASY AND FORTUNE COOKIES

Introduction by Rick Marschall

William Randolph Hearst's King Features Syndicate through the years not only originated many great strips, but also—sometimes shamelessly—copied successful strips of other syndicates: such was the luxury of operation in the Golden Age of comics. In the 1920s and '30s new comics were introduced virtually every month, even if today we only recall the classics that hit. In response to the success of *Dick Tracy*, for instance, King responded in kind (they thought) with *Secret Agent X-9*, *Red Barry*, *Radio Patrol*, and *Inspector Wade*.

Similarly, the success of Harold Gray's *Little Orphan Annie* inspired imitations. King Features introduced two carbon-copies in 1927, *Little Tommy Tucker* by Herman Thomas and *The Two Orphans* by Zere (Alfred Ablitzer); both were quickly forgotten. Another swipe was *Little Annie Rooney*, which had a long life. But although *Little Annie Rooney* was a commercial success (never, however, remotely rivalling Harold Gray's original), its *spinoff* was a critical gem. *Ming Foo* lasted a brief decade in newspapers but is a minor classic in comic-strip history.

The 1925 film *Little Annie Rooney*, starring Mary Pickford, was possibly the direct inspiration, for cartoonist Tom McNamara reportedly scripted an episode by that title and recruited Bud Counihan (later to draw *Betty Boop*) to draw them. Nothing came of that attempt, however, except possibly the attractiveness of the title. It was two years later, when King introduced the other orphan strips, that *Little Annie Rooney* was introduced, drawn by Ed Verdier. Two years later "Verd" was replaced by Ben Batsford. Within a year the strip was handed to Darrell McClure, and soon afterwards the Sunday pages was spun off to Nicholas Afonsky.

The scripting seem to have been done from the start by a professional scripter, and—on paper, as it were, at least—the choice was a wise one. Brandon Walsh had worked on *The Gumps* under Sidney Smith during the period (the early and mid-'20s) when that strip pioneered both melodrama and adventure in the funnies. The wise choice was not just because *The Gumps* was a first-rate strip in those categories—the Sunday adventures, ghosted by Stanley Link, remain classics of the form—but because *Little Annie Rooney* was to develop in schizophrenic fashion: melodrama in the dailies, and adventures in the Sundays, particularly when *Ming Foo* spun off into its own page.

Some of *The Gumps* adventures had featured the son, Chester, accompanied by an old sea captain and an epigram-spouting Oriental named Ching Chow; the power and fortune of Chester's billionaire uncle Bim hovered over each escapade. Walsh in effect ripped himself off when he created a trio in *Little Annie Rooney* consisting of a lad named Donnie, a sea dog named Dan, and an epigram-spouting Oriental named Blotto. Although *Donnie* spun off as a separate Sunday page (showcasing McClure's talent for seascapes), the characters, if not the formula, were evidently deemed lacking.

In the *Annie Rooney* strip, a new trio appeared through 1934—the boy Joey Robbins, the old salt Tom Trout, and the epigram-spouting Oriental Ming Foo. (Uncle George, actually Joey's grandfather, was the wealthy protector-figure.) After weaving in and out of the daily and Sunday *Annie Rooney*, and even the Sunday *Donnie*, *Ming Foo* became its own titled Sunday page on March 17, 1935, in the midst of the Hearst organization's push to establish tabloid comics as the dominant format of Sunday funnies. Nicholas Afonsky was assigned to the art, signing his work (as he had not been permitted to do during his early work for King), although Brandon Walsh received primary credits.

As with other kid strips of the early- to mid-'30s, *Ming Foo* became one of genuine adventure (*Tim Tyler's Luck* and *Dickie Dare* were two that evolved from boy's light adventure to derring-do; and the early *Terry and the Pirates* was yet another strip featuring a comic Oriental). *Ming Foo* became a strip separate from *Little Annie Rooney*, and its adventurous flavor soon turned toward fantasy as the unlikely but familiar trio travelled to exotic locales and battled bizarre villains.

Walsh and Afonsky proved to be a good team. The storylines of *Ming Foo* are the stuff of vintage pulps and exciting Saturday-morning serials—not classic fiction but funky period adventures: good enough to stand the test of time and provide interesting reading. Afonsky's artwork is particularly engaging. He had been a court artist under the Czars until he escaped with his life in 1917 (wriggling away like a little czardine) and settling in America. He worked as an assistant to Ed Wheelan on *Minute Movies*, drawing the more handsome of that strip's series, until he was enticed away by King Features (Wheelan always maintained that King "stole" Afonsky only to settle a score with him because he had left Hearst years earlier). Afonsky's work on *Ming Foo*—his other strips included *Fablettes* and *Heroes of American History*—was a blend of the comic and realistic; it was full of strong personalities and crisp pen lines. Afonsky and *Ming Foo* both died in 1943, bringing to an end one of the more interesting careers and one of the more interesting strips among the footnotes of comics' forgotten heritage.

MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

FAVORING WINDS AND A CALM SEA FIND MING FOO AND HIS BRAVE CREW SAFE ABOARD "THE BAMBOO QUEEN" A SHIP MADE ENTIRELY OF BAMBOO FROM KEEL TO TOPMASTS. FEARING THEIR STRANGE CRAFT MAY NOT WEATHER A STORM, ALL HANDS KEEP A LOOKOUT FOR A PASSING SHIP

A WEEK HAS PASSED AND WE ARE STILL A THOUSAND MILES FROM THE NEAREST PORT- NOW IF WE WERE FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO BE ABOARD A STEAMER WE COULD...

TROUBLE AHEAD, MATES- THE BAROMETER'S DROPPING LIKE A PLUMMET-- THAT MEANS STORMY WEATHER!
I FEAR THIS SHIP WILL KEEL OVER IN A ROUGH SEA!

IT IS THIS UNCANNY PERSON'S ROCKLIKE OPINION- WHEN MARKED BY DESTINY A PERSON WILL SURELY BE DROWNED EVEN IF HE LIVES AMONG THE BRANCHES OF AN EXTREMELY TALL TREE

IT HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY PROCLAIMED- TROUBLE RAINS ON THOSE ALREADY WET!
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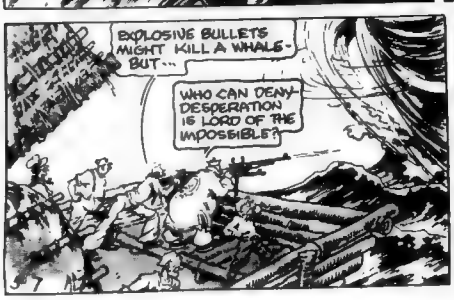
MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

MING FOO AND HIS FRIENDS ABOARD THE "BAMBOO QUEEN" ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE FACT THAT THEIR CURIOUS-LOOKING CRAFT HAS PROVED SEAWORTHY FAR BEYOND THEIR WILDEST DREAMS- FOR A WEEK, THE SHIP HAS BEEN THE PLAYTHING OF FIERCE WINDS AND STORMY WATERS- YET SHOWS NO SIGNS OF ITS BATTLE WITH THE RAGING ELEMENTS...

I TELL YOU, MATEY- IT'S UNCANNY- A STRONG WIND ASTERN- ALL SAILS SET- AND WE'RE TRAPPED IN A CURRENT THAT'S DRAGGING THE SHIP BACKWARD



IT IS TRULY WRITTEN - THE COWARD DIES A THOUSAND DEATHS- THE BRAVE MAN ONLY ONE!
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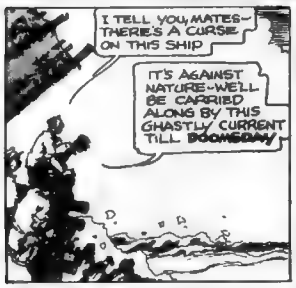
AMERICA'S GREATEST SUNDAY, MAY 14, 1939 COMIC WEEKLY

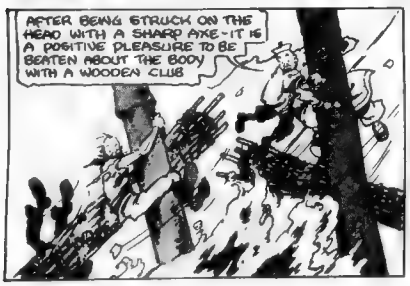
MING FOO

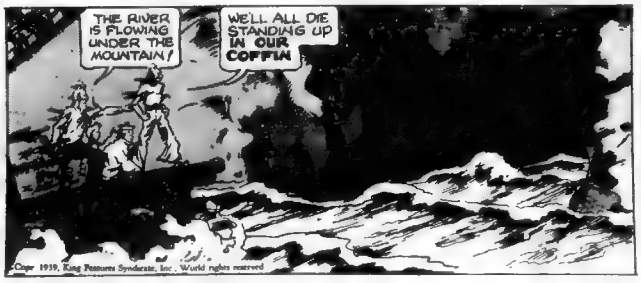
by BRANDON WALSH—

TRAPPED IN A MYSTERIOUS CURRENT—MING FOO'S SHIP—THE "BAMBOO QUEEN" IS CARRIED ONWARD THROUGH THE TROPIC WATERS IN SPITE OF THE DESPERATE EFFORTS OF THE CREW TO RELEASE THEIR CRAFT FROM THE RESISTLESS FORCE THAT IS CARRYING THEM SWIFTLY TO AN UNKNOWN DESTINATION···

HOUR AFTER HOUR—THE SPEED OF THIS MALIGNANT CURRENT INCREASES!
IF THE INFERNAL CURRENT GOES ANY FASTER—IT WILL TEAR THE SHIP TO PIECES!
WHO CAN DENY TO WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW IS TO BE UNHAPPY TODAY!


I TELL YOU, MATES—THERE'S A CURSE ON THIS SHIP
IT'S AGAINST NATURE—WE'LL BE CARRIED ALONG BY THIS GHASTLY CURRENT TILL DOOMSDAY




THE RIVER IS FLOWING UNDER THE MOUNTAIN!
WE'LL ALL DIE STANDING UP IN OUR COFFIN
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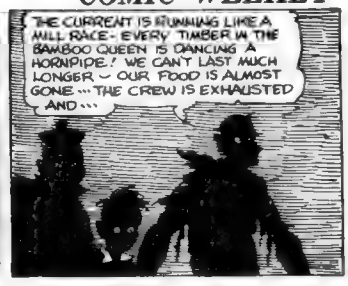
AMERICA'S GREATEST SUNDAY, MAY 21, 1939 COMIC WEEKLY

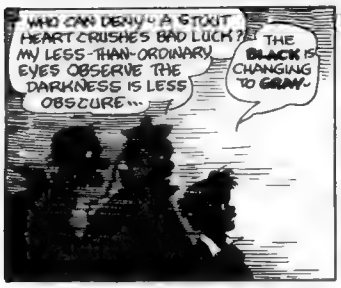
MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH—

HELD FAST IN THE GRIP OF A RESISTLESS CURRENT—THE BAMBOO QUEEN" IS SWEPT INTO THE UNDERGROUND RIVER—ON AND ON—HOUR AFTER HOUR—THE DOOMED SHIP AND ITS HAPLESS CREW ARE DRAWN ALONG THE SABLE, SWIISTER CHANNEL OF PERPETUAL DARKNESS TO THEIR UNSEEN FATE —

GOLLY, MING— I'M SCARED— DO YOU THINK WE'LL EVER SEE DAYLIGHT AGAIN?
IT IS TRULY WRITTEN: THE BRIDGE BETWEEN SORROW AND JOY IS NOT LONG


THE CURRENT IS RUNNING LIKE A MILL RACE— EVERY TIMBER IN THE BAMBOO QUEEN IS DANCING A HORNPIPE! WE CAN'T LAST MUCH LONGER — OUR FOOD IS ALMOST GONE··· THE CREW IS EXHAUSTED AND···


WHO CAN DENY— A STOUT HEART CRUSHES BAD LUCK? MY LESS-THAN-ORDINARY EYES OBSERVE THE DARKNESS IS LESS OBSCURE···
THE BLACK IS CHANGING TO GRAY—

THERE'S A CURSE ON THIS SHIP! WE'RE ALL DEAD MEN!
SILENCE! THIS USELESS ONE RECALLS: THERE IS A COVER FOR EVERY POT— REMAIN TOGETHER— KEEP YOUR EYES COVERED— TIME IS A WISE DOCTOR!

IT'S NO USE, MATES— WE'RE ALL BLIND— WITHOUT A PILOT TO STEER THE SHIP— WE'RE ALL DEAD MEN— AND YOU MAY LAY TO THAT!
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MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

BLINDED BY THE UNCHANGING DARKNESS OF THE UNDERGROUND RIVER-"THE BAMBOO QUEEN" AT LAST EMERGES INTO THE LIGHT—THE ABRUPT CHANGE FROM DARKNESS TO SUNLIGHT BLINDS MING FOO AND HIS FRIENDS-UNPILOTED, THE SHIP IS CAUGHT FAST IN THE RACING UNDERTOW THAT SWIRLS AROUND THE DEADLY VORTEX IN THE CENTER OF THE FIENDISH WHIRLPOOL

MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

CARRIED BY THE IRRESISTIBLE CURRENT, "THE BAMBOO QUEEN" IS STRANDED IN THE CENTER OF THE RIVER IN FRONT OF A STRANGE CITY WHOSE INHABITANTS SEND ONE OF THEIR FIGHTING SHIPS TO ATTACK THE HAPLESS VESSEL. THE WATERS OF THE RIVER VANISH, LEAVING THE SHIP LIKE A NAUTICAL ISLAND IN A DESERT OF DEADLY QUICKSANDS...

IT'S LUCKY FOR US THE WATER DISAPPEARED-THAT STRANGE WAR GALLEY WAS ABOUT TO MAKE A NIGHT ATTACK ON US
IT IS WRITTEN THE LAME DUCK SHOULD AVOID THE PLOWED FIELDS

IT LOOKS LIKE AN OLD ROMAN CATAPULT-A VERY DANGEROUS WEAPON--WHEN WE FIRED THE CANNON LOADED WITH THE LIFE-ROPE THEY FEARED WE WERE ATTACKING THE CITY

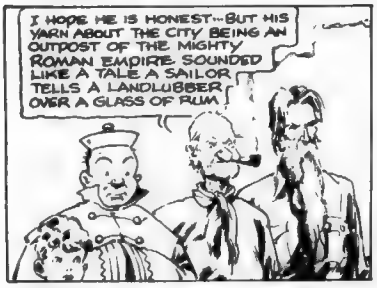
MING FOO

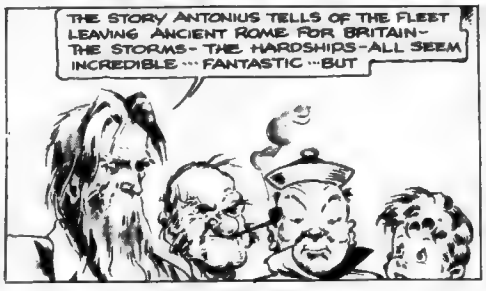
~ by BRANDON WALSH ~

THE WATERS HAVE VANISHED, LEAVING THE BAMBOO QUEEN STRANDED IN A RIVER BED SURROUNDED BY DEADLY QUICKSANDS ... IN THE BACKGROUND IS THE LOST CITY OF ROMULUS. HAVING SAVED ANTONIUS, ONE OF THE CITY'S WARRIORS, FROM DEATH IN THE QUICKSAND, OUR FRIENDS SEND HIM INTO THE CITY TO TRY TO ARRANGE AN ARMISTICE ...

WHY DON'T THEY DO SOMETHING ONE WAY OR THE OTHER? WAR OR PEACE IS BETTER THAN WAITING
IT'S BEEN TWO DAYS SINCE OUR FRIEND ANTONIUS, ENTERED THE CITY

IT IS TRULY SPOKEN - THE HASTY MAN BREEDS TROUBLE
WE SAVED ANTONIUS FROM DEATH IN THE QUICKSAND - I FEEL SURE HE IS AN HONEST MAN -


I HOPE HE IS HONEST - BUT HIS YARN ABOUT THE CITY BEING AN OUTPOST OF THE MIGHTY ROMAN EMPIRE SOUNDED LIKE A TALE A SAILOR TELLS A LANDLUBBER OVER A GLASS OF RUM


THE STORY ANTONIUS TELLS OF THE FLEET LEAVING ANCIENT ROME FOR BRITAIN - THE STORMS - THE HARDSHIPS - ALL SEEM INCREDIBLE ... FANTASTIC ... BUT

WHO CAN DENY - TRUTH WILL RISE ABOVE FALSEHOOD AS OIL ABOVE WATER?
WELL, UNLESS WE'RE DREAMING, THE CITY IN FRONT OF US PROVES HE WAS -

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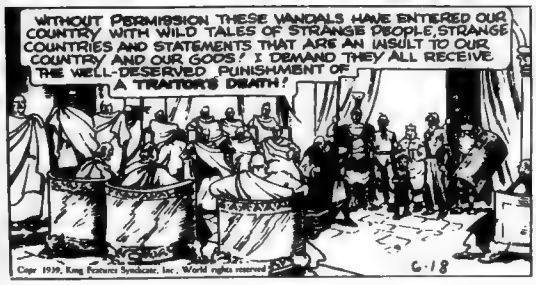
MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

THE "BAMBOO QUEEN" IS STRANDED IN AN UNKNOWN RIVER BEFORE THE GATES OF THE CITY OF ROMULUS, INHABITED BY THE DESCENDANTS OF A COMPANY OF ADVENTURERS THAT LEFT ANCIENT ROME COUNTLESS YEARS AGO ... MING FOO AND HIS FRIENDS HAVE ENTERED THE CITY WHERE THEY ARE LOOKED UPON WITH SUSPICION, AS POSSIBLE ENEMIES

FEAR NOT, MY FRIEND ... ROMAN JUSTICE IS FAIR TO ALL AND I AM WELL-KNOWN IN THE CITY ... YOU AND YOUR BRAVE COMPANIONS RISKED YOUR LIVES TO SAVE MINE!


WITHOUT PERMISSION THESE VANDALS HAVE ENTERED OUR COUNTRY WITH WILD TALES OF STRANGE PEOPLE, STRANGE COUNTRIES AND STATEMENTS THAT ARE AN INSULT TO OUR COUNTRY AND OUR GODS! I DEMAND THEY ALL RECEIVE THE WELL-DESERVED PUNISHMENT OF A TRAITOR'S DEATH!

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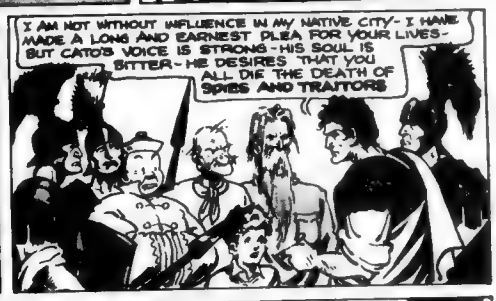
MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

ACCUSED OF BEING SPIES WHO HAVE COME TO THE CITY OF ROMULUS FOR THE PURPOSE OF LEADING A HORDE OF INVADERS TO DESTROY IT, THE ENRAGED PEOPLE OF THE CITY ARREST MING AND HIS COMPANIONS. CATO, THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR, FIGHTS TO HAVE THEM SENTENCED TO DEATH, WHILE ANTONIUS, THE NATIVE WARRIOR WHOSE LIFE MING SAVED, FIGHTS TO PROTECT THEIR LIBERTY AND THEIR LIVES.

WHO CAN DENY- THERE IS A TIME TO FISH AND A TIME TO DRY NETS- ONLY THE WITLESS ONE RUNS THROUGH THE DARKNESS WHEN THE PATHWAY IS LINED WITH PITFALLS!


I AM NOT WITHOUT INFLUENCE IN MY NATIVE CITY- I HAVE MADE A LONG AND EARNEST PLEA FOR YOUR LIVES- BUT CATO'S VOICE IS STRONG- HIS SOUL IS BITTER- HE DESIRES THAT YOU ALL DIE THE DEATH OF SPIES AND TRAITORS

ON TABLETS OF JADE IT IS INSCRIBED, "IF THERE WERE NO CLOUDS, WHO COULD ENJOY THE SUN?" IT IS WRITTEN," THE DUST THAT FOOLS STIR UP MAY BLIND A SAGE!"
G·2·5

SILENCE! THE HONORABLE JUDGES HAVE CONSULTED THE GODS OF WISDOM- AND BRING A JUST VERDICT!
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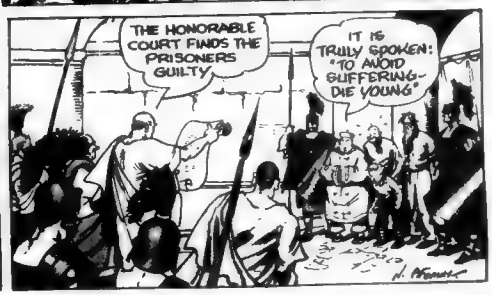
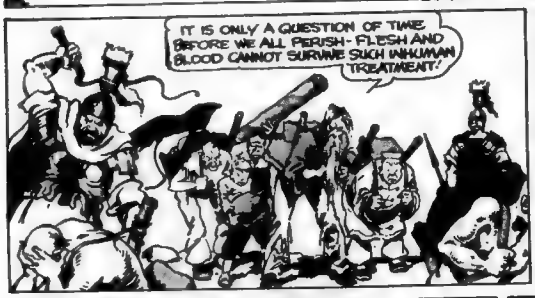


MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

MING AND HIS COMPANIONS ARE TRIED AND FOUND GUILTY OF TREASON AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF ROMULUS AND CONDEMNED TO DEATH, BUT ANTONIUS, A FRIENDLY AND POWERFUL WARRIOR, INTERCEDES WITH A PLEA FOR MERCY. OUR FRIENDS' LIVES ARE SPARED, BUT THEY ARE SENTENCED TO SPEND THEIR REMAINING YEARS IN SLAVERY.



WHO CAN DENY: THE LUCKY SLAVE LIVES ON ONLY ONE DAY, BUT MY USELESS INTELLECT RECALLS, "THOUGH I HAVE LOST MY RING- I STILL HAVE MY FINGER"?

WHAT MEANS THIS? YOU UNDER-DOGS WERE CONDEMNED TO SLAVE IN THE MINES- NOT TO ENJOY THE LUXURY OF FRESH AIR AND SUNLIGHT!
PARDON, GOOD CATO, MY ORDERS WERE...

SILENCE! AND TAKE THEM HENCE TO THE LOWEST MINE TO LABOR IN THE COLD AND DARKNESS UNTIL...
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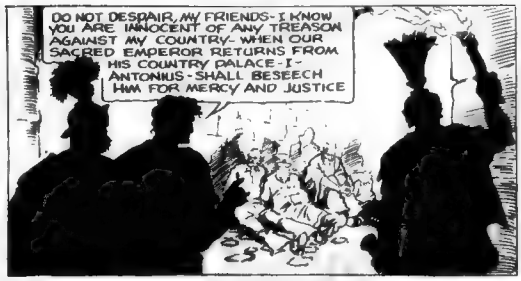
7-2

MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH~

CONDEMNED TO A LIFE OF SLAVERY-MING FOO AND HIS COMPANIONS ARE ON THEIR WAY TO SPEND THE REST OF THEIR LIVES WORKING IN THE MINES WHERE A RAY OF LIGHT NEVER PENETRATES-WHERE THE ONLY HOPE THE LUCKLESS SLAVES CHERISH IS FOR AN EARLY DEATH TO RELIEVE THEIR SUFFERINGS~

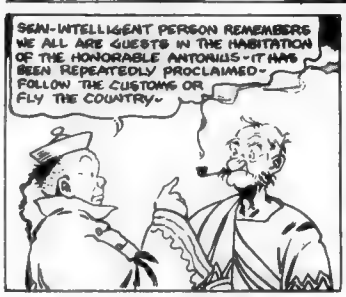

DO NOT DESPAIR, MY FRIENDS- I KNOW YOU ARE INNOCENT OF ANY TREASON AGAINST MY COUNTRY- WHEN OUR SACRED EMPEROR RETURNS FROM HIS COUNTRY PALACE-I- ANTONIUS-SHALL BESEECH HIM FOR MERCY AND JUSTICE

CATO IS MY ENEMY- YOU EARNED HIS HATRED BY SAVING MY LIFE WHEN THE SACRED EMPEROR HEARS MY STORY...
SEE-HERE COME THE GUARDS TO TAKE US AWAY

MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH~

MING FOO AND HIS FRIENDS-MARCHING AWAY TO SLAVE IN THE DEADLY DARKNESS OF THE MINES-RESCUE THE ONLY DAUGHTER OF THE EMPEROR FROM DEATH IN A RUNAWAY CHARIOT~ AS A REWARD FOR THEIR DARING COURAGE THEY ARE GRANTED THE EMPEROR'S PARDON-BUT THEY KNOW CATO, THEIR POWERFUL ENEMY-ONLY WEARS A MASK OF FRIENDSHIP TO HIDE HIS UNDYING HATRED~


SEMI-WITELLIGENT PERSON REMEMBERS WE ALL ARE GUESTS IN THE HABITATION OF THE HONORABLE ANTONIUS- IT HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY PROCLAIMED~ FOLLOW THE CUSTOMS OR FLY THE COUNTRY~

THE SACRED EMPEROR SENDS GREETINGS AND GIFTS- AND COMMANDS YOUR ATTENDANCE AS HIS HONORED GUESTS AT THE IMPERIAL CIRCUS
OUR IGNOBLE FOREHEADS ARE BURIED IN THE DUST BEFORE HIS IMPERIAL BENEVOLENCE!

MY FRIENDS- I HAVE MADE SUITABLE OFFERING TO THE GODS FOR THE GOOD FORTUNE BESTOWED ON ALL OF US!
THIS IS A DAY TO BE REMEMBERED WITH THE BEATING OF COUNTLESS SILVER GONGS!

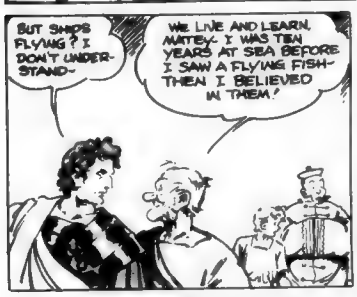
GOLLY! THE LIONS ARE KILLING 'EM! ISN'T THERE SOME WAY WE CAN SAVE THE POOR CAPTIVES?
AND THE SWAB CALLS THIS SLAUGHTER A CIRCUS--IF I HAD~
7-16

MING FOO

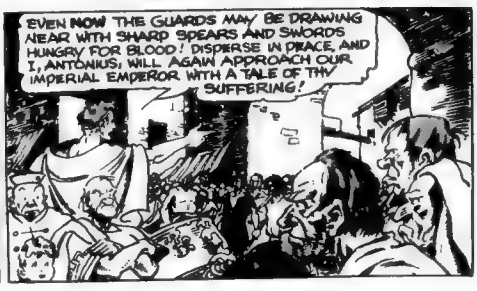
by BRANDON WALSH

MING FOO AND HIS FRIENDS SAVE THE LIFE OF THE EMPEROR'S DAUGHTER - THE GRATEFUL EMPEROR - LEARNING THEIR STORY - GRANTS THEM THEIR FREEDOM AND GIVES THEM MANY ROYAL GIFTS AS A REWARD FOR THEIR SKILL AND COURAGE

YOU MEAN SHIPS FLY THROUGH THE AIR LIKE BIRDS, CARRYING AS MANY PASSENGERS AS ONE OF THE GALLEYS? IT SEEMS INCREDIBLE... SUPERNATURAL...


BUT SHIPS FLYING? I DON'T UNDERSTAND -
WE LIVE AND LEARN, MATEY - I WAS TEN YEARS AT SEA BEFORE I SAW A FLYING FISH - THEN I BELIEVED IN THEM!

ATTENTION, GOOD CITIZENS! KNOW YE NOT IT IS I, ANTONIUS, THY FRIEND, WHO SPEAKS?! MY HEART BLEEDS FOR YOUR UNDESERVED ILL-FORTUNE! BUT FORGET NOT THE SACRED EMPEROR HAS DECREED DEATH TO ALL LAW-BREAKERS!


EVEN NOW THE GUARDS MAY BE DRAWING NEAR WITH SHARP SPEARS AND SWORDS HUNGRY FOR BLOOD! DISPERSE IN PEACE, AND I, ANTONIUS, WILL AGAIN APPROACH OUR IMPERIAL EMPEROR WITH A TALE OF THY SUFFERING!

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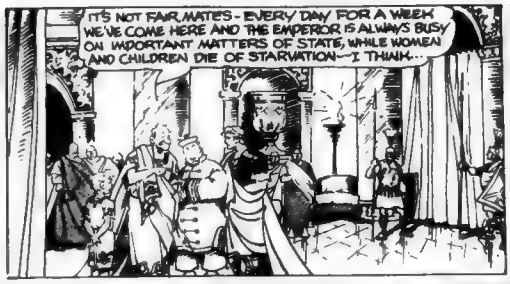
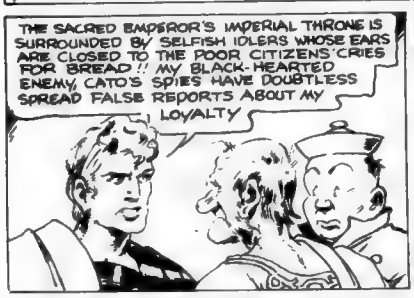
MING FOO

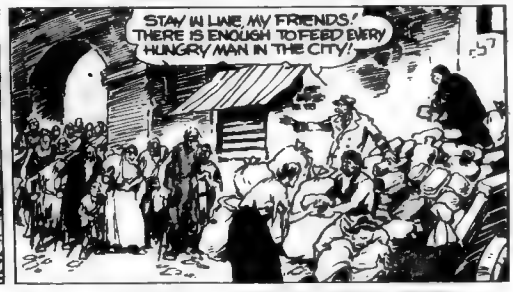
by BRANDON WALSH

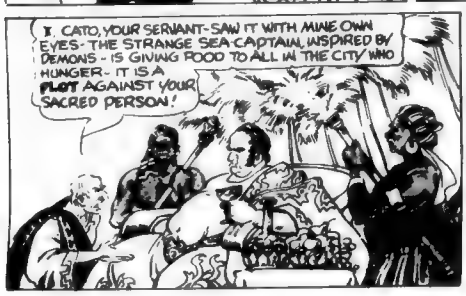
GRANTED THEIR FREEDOM BY THE EMPEROR OF ROMULUS - MING FOO AND HIS COMPANIONS TOUR THE MIGHTY METROPOLIS - GUIDED BY THE NOBLE ANTONIUS - IN THE SLUMS OF THE CITY - A HUNGRY MOB ATTACKS THE CHARIOT OF AN ARISTOCRAT ANTONIUS, A FRIEND OF THE POOR, BEGS THE RIOTERS TO REMEMBER THAT DEATH IS THE PENALTY FOR LAW-BREAKING. ANTONIUS PROMISES TO BESEECH THE EMPEROR TO REDUCE THE CRUEL FOOD TAXES...

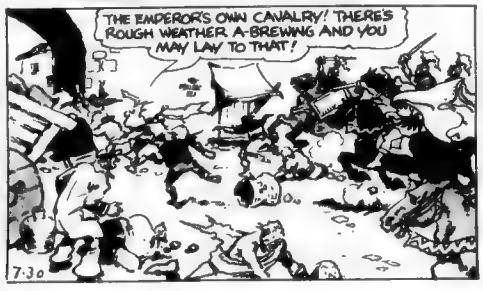

IT'S NOT FAIR, MATES - EVERY DAY FOR A WEEK WE'VE COME HERE AND THE EMPEROR IS ALWAYS BUSY ON IMPORTANT MATTERS OF STATE, WHILE WOMEN AND CHILDREN DIE OF STARVATION - I THINK...


THE SACRED EMPEROR'S IMPERIAL THRONE IS SURROUNDED BY SELFISH IDLERS WHOSE EARS ARE CLOSED TO THE POOR CITIZENS' CRIES FOR BREAD!! MY BLACK-HEARTED ENEMY, CATO'S SPIES HAVE DOUBTLESS SPREAD FALSE REPORTS ABOUT MY LOYALTY

I WANT MONEY IN A HURRY - HOW MUCH CAN YOU PAY FOR A PEARL FIT FOR AN EMPEROR'S CROWN -
IT IS BEAUTIFUL - I WILL BE GENEROUS - YOUR HEART IS KIND




I, CATO, YOUR SERVANT - SAW IT WITH MINE OWN EYES - THE STRANGE SEA-CAPTAIN, INSPIRED BY DEMONS - IS GIVING FOOD TO ALL IN THE CITY WHO HUNGER - IT IS A PLOT AGAINST YOUR SACRED PERSON!



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MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

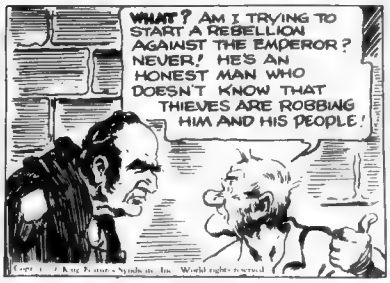
TOM TROUT SELLS A LARGE PEARL FOR MONEY TO BUY FOOD FOR THE POOR PEOPLE OF ROMULUS - HUNGRY HORDES GATHER AROUND TOM. CATO, JEALOUS OF OUR FRIEND'S POPULARITY, INFORMS THE EMPEROR THAT TOM, MING, ETC., ARE INCITING THE CITIZENS OF ROMULUS TO OVERTHROW THE EMPEROR. THE EMPEROR, BELIEVING CATO'S FALSEHOOD, ORDERS TOM ARRESTED

THE WISE CATO DECLARES THE SAILOR IS INCITING MY PEOPLE TO REBELLION-
-AND I, YOUR IMPERIAL HIGHNESS, OFFER MY LIFE AS RANSOM FOR MY WORDS

CATO COMMANDS THE TAX-GATHERERS WHO ARE BANDED TOGETHER LIKE THIEVES - ONLY A SMALL PART OF THE TAXES THEY COLLECT EVER REACHES THE IMPERIAL TREASURE CHESTS
THE TRUTH REMAINS HIDDEN FROM MY EYES -

A WRONG VIEW HAS BEEN TAKEN OF THE MATTER- DISGUISED AS A BEGGAR- YOUR IMPERIAL HIGHNESS COULD GO FORTH - HEAR THE VOICES OF YOUR PEOPLE - WHILE WE, WITH UNFAILING VIGILANCE, GUARD YOUR SACRED FOOTSTEPS

TWICE I HAVE PAID THE TAX - NOW I LACK A SINGLE COIN- MY CHILDREN STARVE!
SILENCE - THOU LYING DOG! WOULDST THOU DISOBEY THE EMPEROR'S COMMAND?

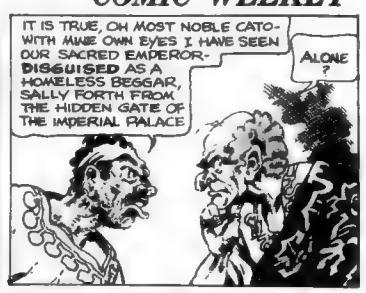

WHAT? AM I TRYING TO START A REBELLION AGAINST THE EMPEROR? NEVER! HE'S AN HONEST MAN WHO DOESN'T KNOW THAT THIEVES ARE ROBBING HIM AND HIS PEOPLE!

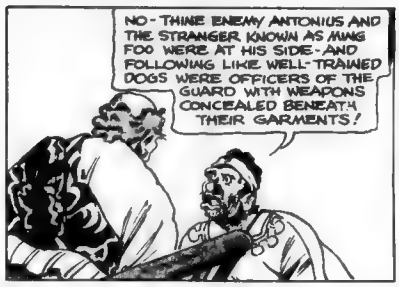
CATO IS CLEVER - UNSCRUPULOUS - HIS HEART IS EVIL - THE EMPEROR SEES ONLY THE MASK HE WEARS TO HIDE THE TRUTH!
IT IS WRITTEN 'A SHORT AXE CAN REACH THE TRUNK OF THE TALLEST TREE'
N. A. Frosier 8-6

MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

THE CRAFTY AND POWERFUL STATESMAN, CATO, WHILE SWEARING ETERNAL LOYALTY TO THE EMPEROR OF ROMULUS - IS SECRETLY INCITING A REBELLION THAT WILL OVERTHROW THE EMPIRE. DISGUISED AS A BEGGAR - THE EMPEROR - ACCOMPANIED BY THE NOBLE SENATOR ANTONIUS AND MING FOO - WANDERS AROUND THE CITY TO LEARN THE TRUE CONDITION OF AFFAIRS -


IT IS TRUE, OH MOST NOBLE CATO - WITH MINE OWN EYES I HAVE SEEN OUR SACRED EMPEROR - DISGUISED AS A HOMELESS BEGGAR, SALLY FORTH FROM THE HIDDEN GATE OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE
ALONE?


NO - THINE ENEMY ANTONIUS AND THE STRANGER KNOWN AS MING FOO WERE AT HIS SIDE - AND FOLLOWING LIKE WELL-TRAINED DOGS WERE OFFICERS OF THE GUARD WITH WEAPONS CONCEALED BENEATH THEIR GARMENTS!

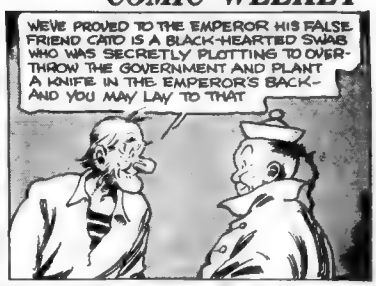
THERE IS THY REWARD IN YELLOW GOLD - CONTINUE TO WATCH - AND REPORT - AND FORGET NOT - YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON YOUR SILENCE!
I HEAR AND OBEY!

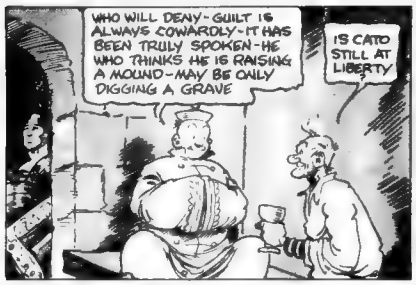
MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH—

THE DISGUISED EMPEROR OF ROMULUS—ACCOMPANIED BY MING AND ANTONIUS—IS THE VICTIM OF A TREACHEROUS ATTACK BY COHORTS OF THE RUTHLESS CATO—WHO HAS BEEN SECRETLY PLANNING A REBELLION TO OVERTHROW THE EMPEROR—ONLY GOOD LUCK AND COURAGE ENABLE OUR FRIENDS TO ESCAPE ONE OF CATO'S CLEVERLY PLANNED DEATH-TRAPS.

YES, MATEY—I AM ENJOYING MY LIFE IN PRISON BECAUSE I KNOW I AM HELPING THE EMPEROR AND A MORE HONORABLE PILOT NEVER STEERED A SHIP OF STATE


WE'VE PROVED TO THE EMPEROR HIS FALSE FRIEND CATO IS A BLACK-HEARTED SWAB WHO WAS SECRETLY PLOTTING TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT AND PLANT A KNIFE IN THE EMPEROR'S BACK—AND YOU MAY LAY TO THAT


WHO WILL DENY—GUILT IS ALWAYS COWARDLY—IT HAS BEEN TRULY SPOKEN—HE WHO THINKS HE IS RAISING A MOUND—MAY BE ONLY DIGGING A GRAVE
IS CATO STILL AT LIBERTY

THE TRAITOR CONTINUES TO TREMBLE IN HIS WELL-CONCEALED DEN—BUT THIS UNGAINLY ONE REMEMBERS—IN THE END THE CLEVEREST FOX COMES TO THE FURRIER

OUR PLANS HAVE BEEN THWARTED BY THE FOREIGN DOGS WHO ARE PROTECTED BY MANY POWERFUL DEMONS ... INTO THE EMPEROR'S EARS THEY CONTINUE TO POUR SHREWD STRATAGEMS AND SKILLFUL ADVICE

BUT WHAT ARE WE TO DO? REMAIN HIDDEN LIKE MOLES?
EACH HOUR WE WALK IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH
FEAR NOT—CATO'S EYES ARE OPEN HIS ARMS ARE LONG

I BEAR EVIL TIDINGS—CATO'S MEN HAVE CAPTURED LITTLE JOEY
IT IS WRITTEN: "WE WEEP WHEN WE ARE SORRY AND EVERY DAY EXPLAINS WHY—
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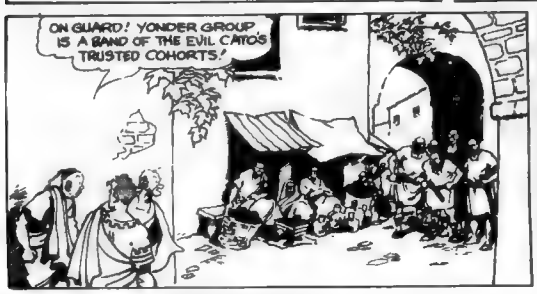
MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH—

CATO, THE CUNNING POLITICIAN, PRETENDING UNDYING LOYALTY, IS SECRETLY INCITING A REBELLION TO OVERTHROW THE EMPEROR. THE EMPEROR DISCOVERS PROOF OF CATO'S TREACHERY. THE WEALTHY CATO FLIES TO ONE OF HIS MANY HIDING-PLACES. FOR REVENGE CATO KIDNAPS LITTLE JOEY AND HOLDS HIM PRISONER, WHILE MING AND HIS FRIENDS SEARCH DESPERATELY TO RESCUE THEIR YOUNG COMRADE—



IN OUR EMPEROR'S NAME—I THANK YOU FOR YOUR COURAGE—MING FOO'S RUSE OF US ALL LOOKING ALIKE SHALL MAKE CATO AND HIS REBELLIOUS HORDE BELIEVE THEY ARE VICTIMS OF SOME POWERFUL MAGICIAN
N. Brunsky 8-27

AMERICA'S GREATEST SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1939 COMIC WEEKLY

MING FOO

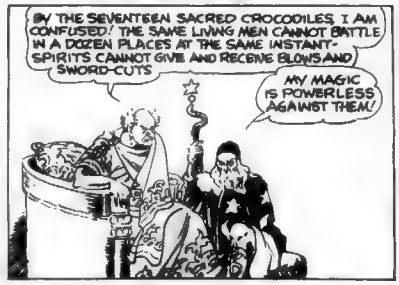
~ by BRANDON WALSH ~

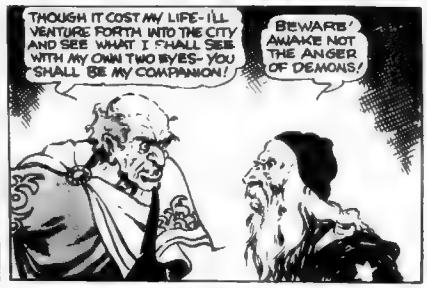
CATO - THE CRAFTY AND UNSCRUPULOUS LEADER OF AN ARMY OF REBELS - IS THE SWORN ENEMY OF MING FOO AND HIS COMPANIONS. CATO IS HOLDING LITTLE JOEY, A PRISONER IN ONE OF HIS STRONGHOLDS - AND OUR FRIENDS ARE DETERMINED TO RESCUE JOEY OR PERISH IN THE ATTEMPT - MING'S CLEVER STRATEGY LEADS CATO TO BELIEVE MING IS A POWERFUL MAGICIAN ~

IT IS THE TRUTH! I SWEAR IT BY ALL THE GODS! AT HIGH NOON WE FOUGHT THE TWO STRANGERS AND ANTONIUS, CAPTAIN OF THE EMPEROR'S GUARDS, IN FRONT OF THE ROUND PALACE - OUR BRUISES WILL PROVE...

HEAR THE TRUTH - OH, JUST CATO. AT HIGH NOON WE ATTACKED ANTONIUS AND THE TWO STRANGERS IN THE CENTER OF THE FRUIT MARKET
JUSTICE, OH NOBLE CATO - AT HIGH NOON WE ATTACKED THE THREE ENEMIES AT THE SIDE OF THE RIVER - MY DEAD COMRADES' BLOOD STILL MARKS THE SPOT THE TIME WAS HIGH NOON

SILENCE! THOU LYING DOGS! HOW COULD THREE MEN, AT THE SAME MOMENT, BATTLE IN PLACES FAR APART?
I WARN THEE - EVIL CLOUDS GATHER THAT STARS TELL OF MAGIC - BLACK MAGIC!


BY THE SEVENTEEN SACRED CROCODILES, I AM CONFUSED! THE SAME LIVING MEN CANNOT BATTLE IN A DOZEN PLACES AT THE SAME INSTANT - SPIRITS CANNOT GIVE AND RECEIVE BLOWS AND SWORD-CUTS
MY MAGIC IS POWERLESS AGAINST THEM!


THOUGH IT COST MY LIFE - I'LL VENTURE FORTH INTO THE CITY AND SEE WHAT I SHALL SEE WITH MY OWN TWO EYES - YOU SHALL BE MY COMPANION!
BEWARE! AWAKE NOT THE ANGER OF DEMONS!

CATO AND HIS COWARDLY CREW TREMBLE BEFORE THE MAGIC OF SEEING MANY COPIES OF OURSELVES APPEARING IN FAR-APART PLACES AT THE SAME TIME!
9-3

AMERICA'S GREATEST SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1939 COMIC WEEKLY

MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

CATO - MING'S CRAFTY ENEMY - DISCOVERS - INSTEAD OF BLACK MAGIC - THE TRICK OF HIRING ACTORS TO IMPERSONATE ANTONIUS, TOM AND MING - WAS JUST ANOTHER OF MING'S PLANS TO CONFUSE CATO'S ARMY OF SPIES - HOLDING LITTLE JOEY A PRISONER IN ONE OF HIS CASTLES - CATO BELIEVES HE CAN USE JOEY TO LURE MING AND TOM INTO A DEATH TRAP ~

THIS COMMONPLACE INDIVIDUAL WILL EMPLOY EVERY EFFORT TO DISCLOSE THE ARTFULLY CONCEALED PRISON OF THE NEVER-TO-BE-PRAISED ENOUGH LITTLE JOEY

CATO HAS THE CUNNING OF THE KING OF EVIL - HIS SPIES GATHER AROUND US LIKE A SCHOOL OF SHARKS AROUND A WOUNDED WHALE
THERE WAS ANOTHER MESSAGE PINNED TO THE DOOR THIS MORNING

CALL ME A SWAB IF I CAN UNDERSTAND HOW ANY DOG CAN FOLLOW A TRAIL ALONG A CROWDED STREET
WHO CAN DENY - A BLIND MOLE CAN TEACH A SAGE THE ART OF DIGGING!

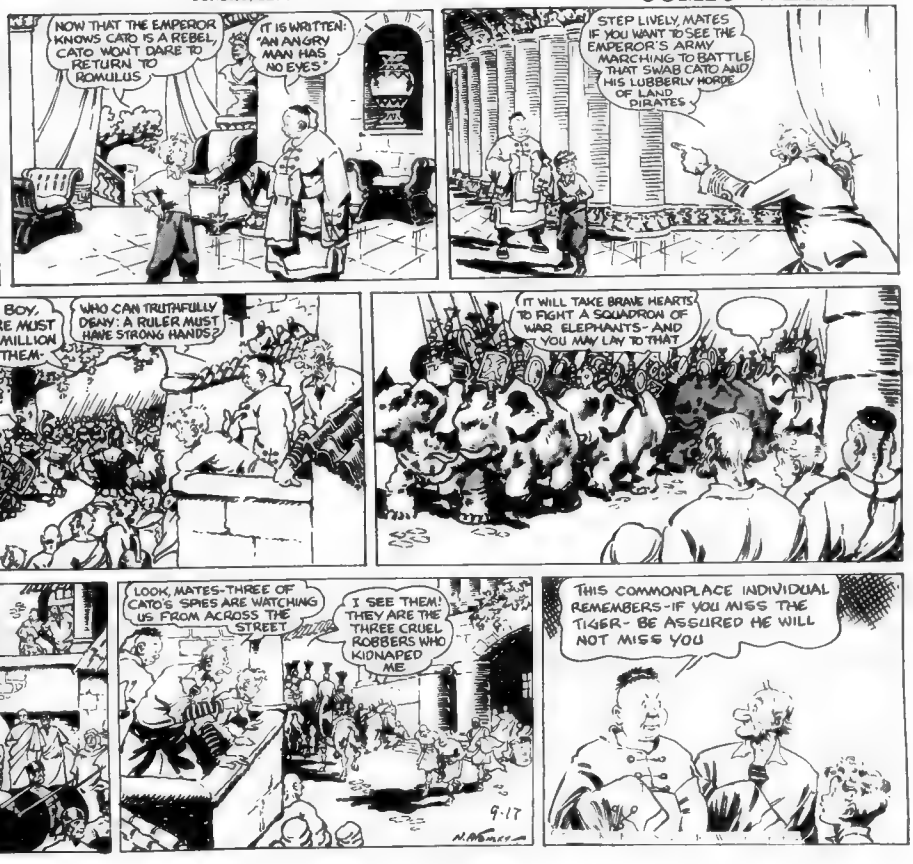
WHEN CATO'S UNOBSTRUSIVE MESSENGER DELIVERED THE MESSAGE, HIS UNSUSPECTING SANDALS RESTED ON A HIGHLY-SCENTED DOOR-MAT - EVEN A YOUNG DOG CAN FOLLOW A STRONG SCENT..

TO ARMS! WE ARE BETRAYED! EVEN NOW REGIMENTS OF THE EMPEROR'S GUARDS ARE IN FRONT OF THE CASTLE!
FEAR NOT! THERE IS YET TIME FOR ALL TO ESCAPE!

MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

MING AND HIS FRIENDS RESCUE LITTLE JOEY FROM HIS PRISON IN THE CATACOMBS UNDER CATO'S CASTLE - BUT CATO ESCAPES AND LEADS HIS REBEL ARMY TO JOIN THE BARBARIAN HILL MEN - WHO LIVE BEYOND THE WALLS - IN A DESPERATE EFFORT TO OVERTHROW THE EMPEROR OF ROMULUS


NOW THAT THE EMPEROR KNOWS CATO IS A REBEL, CATO WON'T DARE TO RETURN TO ROMULUS
IT IS WRITTEN: "AN ANGRY MAN HAS NO EYES"
STEP LIVELY, MATES IF YOU WANT TO SEE THE EMPEROR'S ARMY MARCHING TO BATTLE THAT SWAB CATO AND HIS LUBBERLY HORDE OF LAND PIRATES
OH, BOY, THERE MUST BE A MILLION OF THEM-
WHO CAN TRUTHFULLY DENY: A RULER MUST HAVE STRONG HANDS?
IT WILL TAKE BRAVE HEARTS TO FIGHT A SQUADRON OF WAR ELEPHANTS - AND YOU MAY LAY TO THAT
GAZE AND REMEMBER.. ON YONDER BALCONY STAND THE NOBLE CATO'S ENEMIES! LET THEM DIE THE DEATH - AND YOUR REWARD WILL BE UNTOLD RICHES
WE HEAR AND OBEY
MY KNIFE HUNGERS FOR THEIR BLOOD
LOOK, MATES - THREE OF CATO'S SPIES ARE WATCHING US FROM ACROSS THE STREET
I SEE THEM! THEY ARE THE THREE CRUEL ROBBERS WHO KIDNAPED ME
9-17
THIS COMMONPLACE INDIVIDUAL REMEMBERS - IF YOU MISS THE TIGER - BE ASSURED HE WILL NOT MISS YOU

MING FOO

-by BRANDON WALSH-

THE RUTHLESS CATO - DEADLY ENEMY OF MING AND HIS COMPANIONS - HAS GONE TO LEAD THE REBEL ARMY - LEAVING A HORDE OF TREACHEROUS, SPYING FOLLOWERS - ALL EAGER TO EARN THE LAVISH REWARD CATO OFFERS TO THE ONE WHO SLAYS MING, TOM OR LITTLE JOEY -

YES, POISON IS A FAVORITE WAY OF BRINGING SUDDEN DEATH TO AN ENEMY - THAT'S WHY EVERY NOBLE IN ROMULUS EMPLOYS A FOOD-TASTER AS A GUARD AGAINST POISON
POISONED!
WHO CAN DENY, MISFORTUNE UNAIDED, PREVAILS OVER THE WISDOM OF A THOUSAND SAGES?
HE SAVED OUR LIVES - ONE OF CATO'S SPIES POISONED THE WATER
IN THE DARKNESS EACH ONE WILL DRAW NEAR - NAME THY NAME - PLACE THY RIGHT HAND ON THE PILLAR OF JUSTICE AND DECLARE THY INNOCENCE
IT HAS BEEN TRULY SPOKEN: "IF TWO PERSONS ARE OF THE SAME MIND - THEIR SHARPNESS CAN CUT METAL"
I AM INNOCENT!
9-24
THERE STANDS THE GUILTY MAN! HIS CLEAN HAND PROVES HE DARED NOT TOUCH THE PILLAR OF JUSTICE!
THE TOO-CUNNING FOX TRAPS ITSELF!
MY FRIEND THOU PLANNED IT WELL AND WISELY!
IT IS THIS LESS-THAN-ORDINARY PERSON'S ROCKLIKE OPINION: "GUILT IS ALWAYS COWARDLY"
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SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1939

MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

WITH THEIR DEADLY ENEMY- CATO-LEADING THE BARBARIAN TRIBES IN REBELLION TO OVERTHROW THE EMPEROR OF ROMULUS- MING AND HIS COMPANIONS JOIN THE BRAVE AND LOYAL COMMANDER, ANTONIUS, IN HIS STRUGGLE TO PROTECT THE CITY OF ROMULUS FROM CATO AND HIS HORDES OF SAVAGE WARRIORS.

MY ENEMIES, MING FOO AND ANTONIUS, LEAD A SMALL SCOUTING PARTY IN ADVANCE OF THE EMPEROR'S ARMY- MY HEART HUNGERS FOR THEIR CAPTURE OR DEATH!

I HEAR AND OBEY THY WORDS! MY FEARLESS WARRIORS ARE STRONG AND CUNNING- MY WILD HUNTING-DOGS, UNFED FOR DAYS, WILL FEAST ON THY ENEMIES' BONES BEFORE SUNRISE TOMORROW!

HALT! I FEAR THE SPEED OF OUR RETURNING SCOUTS TELLS OF DANGER AND DEATH IN OUR PATHWAY
IT HAS BEEN SAID: "WHEN SORROW SLEEPS, TREAD SOFTLY"

THOU ART TRAPPED BETWEEN STONE WALLS! COUNTLESS BARBARIANS HAVE UNLEASHED THEIR HUNTING-DOGS- THEY FILL THE CANYON FROM WALL TO WALL!

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SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1939

MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

WITH THEIR DEADLY ENEMY- CATO- IN COMMAND OF THE REBEL ARMY- WHICH IS TRYING TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT OF ROMULUS- MING FOO AND HIS COMPANIONS MARCH WITH THE EMPEROR'S REGIMENT COMMANDED BY THEIR FRIEND- ANTONIUS- KNOWING WELL THAT VICTORY FOR CATO'S FORCES MEANS CAPTURE AND DEATH FOR MING AND HIS FRIENDS

WHAT DISTURBS THEE, NERO?? HAST THY KEEN NOSE SCENTED DANGER?
WHO CAN TRUTHFULLY DENY- A CARELESS SHEPHERD IS THE FRIEND OF THE WOLF?

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MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

WITH THEIR CUNNING ENEMY, CATO, LEADING THE HORDE OF BARBARIANS AGAINST THE EMPEROR-MING AND HIS COMRADES JOIN THEIR NOBLE FRIEND, ANTONIUS, AND HIS REGIMENT, ON GUARD OUTSIDE THE CITY. A STRANGE NOISE IS HEARD AT MIDNIGHT-OUT OF THE DARK SKY A MODERN AIRSHIP CRASHES INTO THE CENTER OF THE CAMP-AND OUR FRIENDS FIND THE WRECKED PLANE WITH ITS UNCONSCIOUS PILOT LYING BESIDE IT--

I DON'T SAY I DON'T BELIEVE YOU OR I DO BELIEVE YOU- I KNOW I'M ALL MIXED UP- I REMEMBER I RAN OUT OF GAS- HAD TO MAKE A LANDING- I CRASHED AN THEN EVERYTHING WENT BLACK!
THEN I WAKE UP- HERE I AM- YOU SAY THIS IS A COUNTRY CALLED ROMULUS- THAT'S BEEN HERE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS- THAT THE PEOPLE LIVING HERE ARE CIVILIZED- BUT LIVE EXACTLY LIKE THEIR ANCESTORS LIVED IN ANCIENT ROME-- RIGHT?!
IT MAY SOUND STRANGE- BUT IT'S ALL TRUE, MATEY, AND YOU MAY LAY TO THAT!
BUT IT SOUNDS FANTASTIC- UNBELIEVABLE! I STILL THINK I LANDED ON MY HEAD AND WILL WAKE UP AND FIND I'M STILL IN THE HOSPITAL!
WHO CAN DENY- ONE LIE WILL CONCEAL A THOUSAND TRUTHS?
ALL RIGHT- I'LL PLAY YOUR GAME- MY NAME IS SMILEY SMITH- I'M AN AMERICAN AVIATOR- WHO LANDED ON MY HEAD IN ROMULUS, A COUPLE OF THOUSAND YEARS BEFORE I WAS BORN- NOW WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?!
OUR FIRST MOVE IS TO EXAMINE YOUR WRECKED PLANE- FIND A WAY TO MAKE IT FLY AGAIN-
THAT'S A CINCH! JUST PHONE FOR A NEW WING AND 1000 GALLONS OF GAS- THE REST WILL BE EASY.
NO USE WASTING ANY MORE TIME - IT NEEDS A DOZEN NEW PARTS AND A FLOCK OF MODERN MECHANICS OR IT WILL NEVER FLY AGAIN!
ROMULUS IS FAMED FOR CUNNING METAL WORKERS- GOLD- BRONZE- COPPER- IN ANY FORM MAY BE SKILFULLY TURNED OUT!
IT IS WRITTEN: "EVEN A MULE MAY TEACH A SAGE THE ART OF DIGGING"!
OKAY, PAL, BUT I CLAIM WITHOUT EXTRA PARTS AN' GOOD MECHANICS WE'LL NEVER LIFT THAT BUS OFF TH' GROUND!
10-15
IT HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY PROCLAIMED: "DESPERATION IS LORD OF THE IMPOSSIBLE"
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MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

OUT OF GAS- SMILEY SMITH MAKES A FORCED LANDING IN ROMULUS. TAKEN FROM HIS WRECKED PLANE, UNCONSCIOUS-HE AWAKENS, PUZZLED BY HIS SURROUNDINGS. HE IS CONVINCED THAT-IN SPITE OF WHAT HE SEES AND HEARS-HIS BRAIN HAS BEEN INJURED, AND THE ANCIENT UNKNOWN CITY, MING, ANTONIUS AND THEIR FANTASTIC STORY ARE ALL A DELIRIOUS DREAM-

NO USE TALKING- I MUST BE DREAMING. ANY MECHANIC WHO CAN DUPLICATE ALL PARTS OF THE PLANE WITH ONLY A KNIFE AND HAMMER BEATS ME- UNLESS I'M JUST SEEING THINGS- IT MUST- IT MUST BE MAGIC!
THIS LESS-THAN-ORDINARY INDIVIDUAL BELIEVES WHEN FOOD FALLS FROM HEAVEN- YOU MUST OPEN YOUR MOUTH-
DID NOT I PROMISE YOU OUR SLAVES ARE MASTERS OF EVERY CUNNING ARTIFICE?
KEEP YOUR FINGERS CROSSED- I HAVE ENOUGH GAS LEFT TO START THE ENGINE IF THE PARTS ARE O.K.!
THIS USELESS ONE PRAYS FOR AUSPICIOUS OMENS!
HIST, MATEY, KEEP YOUR HATCHES CLOSED IN A STRANGE PORT!
HURRAH! NOW WE CAN GET AWAY FROM HERE
NOW, FRIEND, IF THOU DESIRE, YOU MAY AGAIN LEAVE THE EARTH AND JOURNEY ABOVE THE CLOUDS
SORRY, BUT WITHOUT GAS THE OLD BUS IS ANCHORED HERE FROM NOW ON-
10-22
IT HAS BEEN WISELY WRITTEN: "THERE IS A COVER FOR EVERY POT. WHEN TWO MEN ARE OF THE SAME MIND - THEIR SHARPNESS CAN DIVIDE METAL"
I HASTEN WITH THIS MESSAGE TO CATO: "POWERFUL GODS PROTECT HIS ENEMIES - THE BIG EVIL BIRD OF MAGIC STILL LIVES - UNLESS IT IS DESTROYED, DEFEAT AND DEATH HOVER OVER CATO'S ARMIES!"
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MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

SMILEY SMITH - THE PILOT - IS AMAZED WHEN NATIVE ARTISANS, WITH PRIMITIVE TOOLS, DUPLICATE THE BROKEN PARTS OF HIS WRECKED PLANE - BUT WITHOUT GASOLINE THEIR CLEVER WORK IS IN VAIN - MING REFUSES TO GIVE UP HOPE - "THERE MAY BE OIL WELLS SOMEWHERE IN ROMULUS" - ANTONIUS WILL CONSULT A WISE NATIVE SEER AND DOCTOR

BURNING WATERS? FLAMING TOWERS?
MY COMMONPLACE EYES HAVE WATCHED A TRULY MAGNIFICENT SPARK CHANGE AN OIL WELL INTO A FLAMING TOWER

TO DISTILL GASOLINE FROM THE CRUDE OIL WOULD NOT BE DIFFICULT!
BUT THE PLACE OF THE BURNING TOWERS IS SACRED! EVEN OUR MOST COURAGEOUS WARRIORS DARE NOT--
IT'S RUSHY, OF COURSE, BUT...

BUT THE STRANGE SKY BIRD IS LARGER THAN A THOUSAND EAGLES!
IT'S ANGRY ROAR SHAKES THE VERY GROUND!
IT IS THE SLAVE OF EVIL DEMONS!

SILENCE! WITLESS ONE! SAID I NOT THE STRANGERS DESCRIBED IT AS A SHIP MADE OF WOOD AND METAL? UNLESS IT BE DESTROYED IT WILL FLY AWAY AND...

THEN MAY ALL THE GODS DO SO! ONCE IT HAS VANISHED...
WE ARE LOST, FOOL! THINK NOT IT WILL FAIL TO RETURN AND LEAD A THOUSAND MATES TO FEAST ON OUR BONES!

OIL WELLS? THAT SOUNDS GOOD - BUT SUPPOSE YOUR ENEMY, CATO'S ARMY, COMES ALONG WHILE I'M OUT OF GAS?
IT HAS BEEN TRULY SAID: "TO WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW IS TO BE UNHAPPY TODAY"
10-29
N.A.

MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

TO OBTAIN GAS FOR THE PLANE, MING, TOM, WITH A SMALL BAND OF SOLDIERS, REACH THE BORDER OF THE LAND OF THE EVER-BURNING TOWERS, WHICH IS THE SACRED STRONGHOLD OF THE SEERS OF ROMULUS. INVADERS ARE PUNISHED BY TORTURE AND DEATH. JOEY AND SMILEY SMITH REMAIN TO GUARD THE PLANE FROM HARM AT THE HANDS OF THEIR CUNNING AND DESPERATE ENEMY, CATO - AND HIS HORDE OF TREACHEROUS SOLDIERS AND SPIES.

WILL THE BLASTED WALL NEVER END? DAYS AND NIGHTS FIGHTING OUR WAY THROUGH JUNGLE AND NOT A DOOR OR CRACK BIG ENOUGH FOR A RABBIT TO ENTER

THIS UNGAINLY INDIVIDUAL REMEMBERS: "TIME AND PATIENCE CHANGE THE MULBERRY LEAF INTO A SILKEN GARMENT"
LOOK! ANOTHER SIGNAL TOWER!

THE SWANS ARE CLEVER - THE WALLS ARE LINED WITH SIGNAL TOWERS - THEY SEE EVERY MOVE
WHO CAN DENY - EVEN THE WATCHFUL EAGLE LEARNS NOT THE SECRETS OF THE BLIND MOLE?

MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

WITH HOME, FREEDOM, LIFE, ITSELF, ALL DEPENDING ON THEIR EFFORTS - MING AND HIS COMPANIONS RESOLVE THAT - COST WHAT IT MAY - THEY WILL ENTER THE FORBIDDEN LAND OF THE EVER-BURNING TOWERS WHERE, THEY WILL GET GASOLINE - OR DIE IN THE ATTEMPT. MEANWHILE, IN THE STRANDED PLANE - JOEY AND SMILEY SMITH ANXIOUSLY AWAIT THE SIGHT OF THE ADVENTURERS' RETURN -

THE TUNNEL UNDERNEATH THE WALL IS FINISHED - BUT NOW THE HARD PART IS JUST BEGINNING
WHO CAN DENY - EVERY JOURNEY BEGINS WITH ONE STEP?

IF THE STRATAGEM IS WISE, THE RUSHING STREAM MIGHT FLOAT THE GOURDS BEARING THE PRECIOUS OIL UNDER THE WALL INTO OUR WAITING NETS

OUR CAPTAIN, THE NOBLE ANTONIUS, AWAITS NEWS OF THE HONORABLE STRANGERS' SUCCESS!
THE SUN HAS SET TWICE SINCE THE LAST GOURD APPEARED FROM BEYOND THE WALL - I FEAR THE BRAVE ONES ARE DEAD!

IT IS WELL! OUR COMPANIONS RETURN BEARING SPOILS THAT SMELL OF VICTORY
SMELLS LIKE GASOLINE TO ME! RIGHT NOW THAT'S MY PET FORTUNE!

THOU KNOWEST WELL DEATH COMES TO THE DARING ONES WHO ENTER THE FORBIDDEN LAND - TWO FULL DAYS WE WAITED BEFORE RETURNING WITH THE SACRED OIL FOR THE MAGIC BIRD!

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MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

MING AND TOM ARE CAPTURED AND SENTENCED TO DEATH BY THE FIRE-WORSHIPING SEERS WHO RULE THE FORBIDDEN LAND OF EVER-BURNING TOWERS - WHILE SMILEY-LITTLE JOEY AND THEIR STAUNCH FRIEND, ANTONIUS, TAKE OFF FROM THE ANCIENT CITY OF ROMULUS IN SMILEY'S PLANE - RESOLVED TO RESCUE THE UNLUCKY CAPTIVES OR DIE TRYING -

HARKEN THE NOISE! THE POPULACE GATHER TO BEHOLD THE CEREMONY!
MAYBE THEY'LL FIND THE CIRCUS HAS A NEW ACT THIS YEAR
71N
N. A. Emery

BUT HOW CAN YOU BE SURE TOM AND MING ARE ALIVE? THE WALLS ARE HIGH - WE'RE OUTSIDE - AND -
THE SIGNAL TOWERS AT NIGHT REVEAL THE EVENTS OF EACH DAY!

LET'S GO - THE SMOKE WILL HIDE THE PLANE FROM THE GROUND - BUT BE CAREFUL OF THAT LIGHTER - IF IT KISSES THAT GAS-SOAKED PARACHUTE - GOOD NIGHT!

MING FOO

~by BRANDON WALSH~

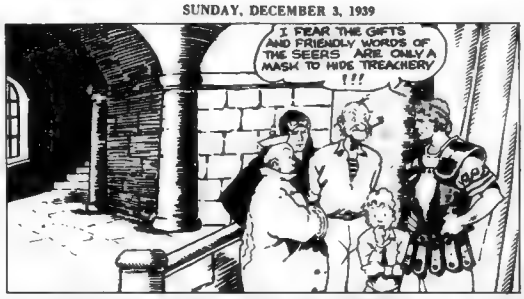
OUT OF THE DARK SKY, ANTONIUS DROPS IN A FLAMING PARACHUTE TO APPEAR BEFORE THE TRIBUNAL OF SEERS IN THE LAND OF THE EVER-BURNING TOWERS. AS A MESSENGER FROM THE ALL-POWERFUL GODS, HE FORCES THE SUPERSTITIOUS SEERS TO RELEASE TOM AND MING FOO

BEHOLD! THOU AND THY FRIENDS ARE BEARERS OF EVIL. THE ANGRY WAVES OF FLAMING JUSTICE, PEOPLE THOU HAST EARNED THE WRATH OF OUR GODS!

MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

HATING MING FOO FOR HIS SUCCESS IN EXPOSING THEIR FALSE DOCTRINES TO THE PEOPLE OF THE LAND OF THE EVER-BURNING TOWERS - THE CRAFTY FALSE SEERS SWEAR TO HAVE REVENGE ON THE STRANGE INTRUDERS FROM THE OUTER PLACES



EVERY SAILORMAN KNOWS A DEVIL-FISH DARKENS THE WATER TO TRAP HIS VICTIMS
I GET GOOSE PIMPLES EVERY TIME THAT HEAD SEER SMILES

THIS COMMONPLACE INDIVIDUAL RECALLS: "A HASTY MAN DRINKS HIS TEA WITH A FORK···ONLY THE WITLESS OPEN A PAPER UMBRELLA IN A CYCLONE!

MING FOO

~by BRANDON WALSH~

LEARNING THAT MANY GUESTS ARE NEVER SEEN ALIVE AFTER ATTENDING A BANQUET GIVEN BY THE FALSE SEERS, MING FOO AND HIS FRIENDS ARE POLITELY DELAYING THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF THE "FRIENDLY" INVITATION TO ATTEND A FEAST IN THEIR HONOR

OUR MOST POWERFUL POTIONS ARE POWERLESS IF THE LORDS OF THE UPPER AIR WITHHOLD THEIR AID
WE ARE MERELY INSTRUMENTS IN UNSEEN HANDS

BELAY THE BIG WORDS AND SAY IS MY SHIPMATE BOUND FOR A SAFE HARBOR OR DAVY JONES' LOCKER?
ONLY THE ALL-SEEING ONES CAN ANSWER THY QUESTION

I PRAY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ALL MY HONORABLE GODS!
THIS WITLESS NONKNOW RECALLS: "FROM TWELVE EGGS THE LUCKY MAN GETS THIRTEEN BIRDS"

THY AUGUST ORDERS HAVE BEEN OBEYED! ERE NOW OUR PATIENT HAS CEASED TO EXIST
SEIZE THE IMPOSTORS! WE ART BETRAYED!
12-10
N. ABENSOUR

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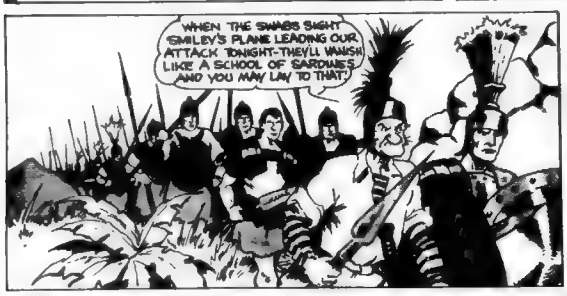
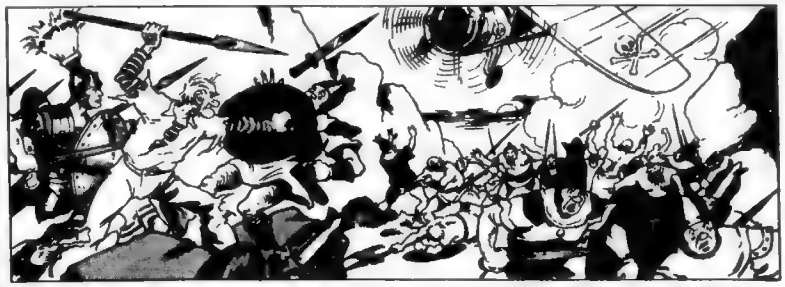
MING FOO

~by BRANDON WALSH~

A TREACHEROUS TRAP IS SET BY THE FALSE-HEARTED HIGH SEER OF THE LAND OF THE EVER-BURNING TOWERS AND MING BECOMES A CAPTIVE SOMEWHERE IN THE HIDDEN CATACOMBS UNDER THE CITY. IN THE MEANTIME TOM, ANTONIUS AND MING'S FRIENDS ARE NOT IDLE

MY THANKS TO THEE, BRAVE SCOUT- FIST THY WEARY BONES - WHEN NIGHT COMES WE REACH THE IMPERIAL CITY OR DIE IN THE ATTEMPT!
SPOKEN LIKE A MAN, MATEY!


WHEN THE SWABS SIGHT SMILEY'S PLANE LEADING OUR ATTACK TONIGHT - THEY'LL VANISH LIKE A SCHOOL OF SARDINES AND YOU MAY LAY TO THAT!



THE UNKIND FATES HAVE PERMITTED ANTONIUS TO REACH THE EMPEROR WITH THE NEWS WE HOLD MING FOO A PRISONER!
THE CLOUDS OF MISFORTUNE GATHER ABOVE OUR UNLUCKY HEADS!!

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SILENCE, THOU FOOLS! IT IS MY PLAN TO RELEASE THE PRISONER WITH HIGH HONORS AND MANY APOLOGIES! IF AN UNSEEN ACCIDENT OCCURS TO THE DEPRAVED MING FOO AFTER HE IS FREE -

MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

LEARNING THAT TOM AND ANTONIUS HAVE ARRIVED AT THE EMPEROR'S PALACE WITH THE NEWS THAT MING IS HELD CAPTIVE BY THE FALSE SEERS~ THE CUNNING SEERS RELEASE MING WITH RICH GIFTS AND HUMBLE APOLOGIES~BUT SECRETLY PLAN HIS "ACCIDENTAL DEATH" FOR WHICH THEY CANNOT BE BLAMED

WHO CAN DENY~ DESTINY HAS FOUR FEET, EIGHT HANDS AND SIXTY EYES?" HOW CAN THIS LESS-THAN-ORDINARY PERSON WITH ONLY TWO OF EACH, HOPE TO ESCAPE?!

MING FOO

by BRANDON WALSH

THE REBELLION AGAINST THE EMPEROR IS ENDED AS A REWARD FOR BRAVERY AND UNSWERVING LOYALTY TO HIS CAUSE~ THE GRATEFUL EMPEROR HONORS ANTONIUS, MING, TOM AND JOEY WITH A ROYAL COMMAND TO BE HIS GUESTS AT THE IMPERIAL PALACE

THOU KNOWEST WELL, OH, MIGHTY EMPEROR, MY FRIENDS, THOUGH STRANGERS, FOUGHT BRAVELY BY MY SIDE IN EVERY BATTLE!
TRUE! THEY HAVE EARNED GRATITUDE WITH THEIR BLOOD!

THEY ARE WEARY OF TRAVELING TO MANY PLACES THEIR HEARTS LONG FOR THEIR HOME THEIR KIN, THEIR FIRESIDES...
ONLY A KNAVE FAILS TO LOVE THE LAND OF HIS BIRTH
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HURRAH! WE'RE GOING HOME!
"THE OPEN SEA A STOUT DECK UNDERFOOT~"
WHO CAN DENY~ IF FOOD FALLS FROM HEAVEN~ WE MUST OPEN OUR MOUTHS
12-31

BACK ISSUES OF NEMO **the classic comics library**

Since 1983 *NEMO* has been resurrecting and reprinting the finest of comics' great heritage. *NEMO* offers thoughtful essays and probing, history-rich interviews. *NEMO* profiles artist and their work. *NEMO* is dedicated to quality in the present, via fine printing paper and exacting reproductions.

Readers from all over the world constantly write, expressing joy at revelations and new discoveries they learn through the pages of *NEMO*. Editor Rick Marschall has assembled the finest possible group of comics scholars, critics and collectors in order to pack every issue with great treasures and meaningful commentary. A set of *NEMO: The Classic Comics Library* can serve as a virtual Master Class in comics history!

2. Super *Superman* focus. A rare, candid interview with **Jerry Siegel** and **Joe Shuster**, conducted by **Ton Andrae**, with the first two weeks of daily *Superman* strips, and much unpublished art. . . Also a reprint of the 1933 fanzine of S-and-S wherein *"The Superman"* made his first appearance anywhere! . . . **Ron Goulart** on superheroes in newspaper strips. . . **Stan Lynde** introduces the Western art in Sunday pages of **Fred Hartman**. . . **Bill Blackbeard** on the birth of newspaper strips, focusing on **William Randolph Hearst**. . . The conclusion of the 1940 Sunday **Terry** episode. . . Penman of the Past **Art Young**, premier radical cartoonist.

7. A **Carl Barks** tribute number, with eight pages of color! A conversation with Carl and **Floyd Gottfredson**. . . rare reprints of Barks art, including sketchbook and storyboard sequences. . . **Tom Andrae** compares Barks's treatments of the same story in comic books and animation. . . A compilation of letters by **Carl Barks**. . . **Donald Phelps** explains the fun surrounding *Smilin' Jack*. . . **Mark Johnson** tells of **Clare Briggs's** early career; with a collection of *Danny Dreamer* pages. . . **Tom Inge** reviews a book on German comics grandfather **Wilhelm Busch**. . . **Allen Saunders** on the Hollywood phase of his career. . . and the Penman of the Past is **Zim**, the acrobatic artist of the turn of the century, with a color Uncle Sam in all his glory!

8. *NEMO*'s first issue-long examination of a comics genius: **Harold Gray** of *Little Orphan Annie*. A special portrait drawn for this number by current *Annie* artist **Leonard Starr**. . . An appreciation by **Rick Marschall**. . . a book-length mature consideration of artist and strip from several angles by **Kenneth Barker**. . . **Donald Phelps** provides an essay on the world of *Annie*. . . **Harry McCraken** offers a biography of **Gray**, fresh from study of the cartoonist's papers. . . A complete *LOA* sequence from 1929: "A Willing Helper."

10. Merry Christmas! A special portfolio of cartoonists' personal Christmas cards through the years. . . **Bill Blackbeard** introduces a unique sequence of *Mutt and Jeff* in which the characters recall their own origins. . . Fantasy in the comics presents **Gustave Verbeek's** bizarre *Upside-Downs* strip in a generous portfolio. . . **Shel Dorf** interviews **Mell Lazarus** and offers *Miss Peach* and *Momma* classics. . . **R.J.M. Lofficier** and **Fred Patten** kick off "Heroes of European Comics" with **Bernard Prince**. . . A portfolio of work by **Raymond Crawford Ewer**, the American Heinrich Kley. . . **Allen Saunders** writes on *Apple Mary* and the craft of strip writing.

11. The Gibson Girl on the cover introduces a generous portfolio of **Charles Dana Gibson's** astounding penwork. . . **Rick Marschall** offers an appreciation of Gibson. . . Beginning a regular *NEMO* department is the intial reprint of *Sam's Strip*, an "in-joke" for strip fans by **Mort Walker** and **Jerry Dumas**. . . **Jay Rath** represents a collection of his *School Days* panels. . . **Morris Weiss** remembers **James Montgomery Flagg**. . . a full portfolio of Flagg's classic tramp strip *Nervy Nat*. . . Outstanding pages from the long run of a forgotten masterpiece, *Slim Jim*, by **Frink, Ewer** and **Armstrong**.

12. **Milton Caniff's** *Miss Lace* on the cover highlights the issue's focus on World War II's great cartoonists, profiled by **Rick Marschall**. . . a portfolio of special war art in honor of **J.V. Connolly** by King Features artists. . . **Frank King's** fantasy masterpiece *Bobby Make-Believe* is examined by **Mark Johnson**, who presents a portfolio of classics. . . **Ron Goulart** introduces a full episode of **Jack Williamson** and **Lee Elias's** S-F classic *Beyond Mars*. . . Penwoman of the Past is **Rose O'Neill**, with a gallery of her remarkable work. . . *Sam's Strip* continues.

13. *Red Barry*, a star of the most violent of crime strips graces this issue's cover. . . From the San Francisco Academy of Comic Art files, "The Mystery of Black Milano," a seven-month episode. . . The Immortal **TAD** is profiled in two contemporary accounts, and collections of *Indoor Sports* and *Silk Hat Harry's Divorce Suit*. . . **Donald Phelps** considers the Arabian Nights and Boardinghouse Days of *Major Hoople*. . . *Sam's Strip* steamrollers on.

15. **Milton Caniff** returns again, with a colorful cover and a full episode of his seminal *Dickie Dare* (presaging a *NEMO Bookshelf* volume). . . **Javier Coma** presents a full history and analysis of *Tim Tyler's Luck* and the many artists who contributed through the years. . . **R.J.M. Lofficier** and **Fred Patten** introduce more of Europe's comic heroes: *Lucky Luke, Blake and Mortimer, Passengers of the Wind*, and **Tardi's** *Adele Blanc-Sec*. . . The science-fiction adventures of *Hairbreadth Harry* continue. . . Book reviews consider *Prince Valiant*, the illustrator in America, and **William Overgard's** brilliant *Rudy*.

16. *NEMO* goes literary. In celebration of the 100th anniverasry of publication of *Huckleberry Finn*, we present a first-person account by legendary cartoonist **E.W. Kemble** about illustrating Twain's classic. . . **Rick Marschall** considers the book, the illustrator, the context, and a superb, forgotten strip based on *Huck*. . . A portfolio of Sunday pages about Huck and Tom Sawyer by **Dwig**. . . Also a complete sequence of pixilated strips by **George Herriman**: *Baron Bean*, a humanized Krazy Kat. . . **Walt and Roger Reed** introduce a Penman of the Past, **Joseph Clement Coll**. . . **Patten** and **Lofficier** profile one of the world's greatest comic artists, **Hugo Pratt**, and his legendary character *Corto Maltese*. . . Hairbreadth Harry's adventures conclude, and *Sam's Strip* goes on.

18. **Al Capp** was one of comics' great personalities. This issue features his last interview, with **Rick Marschall**, and also contains a hilarious speech **Capp** delivered to cartoonists on his craft and approach. . . The great "Blad Iggle" sequence of *Li'l Abner* by **Capp** is reprinted in full. . . In Penman of the Past, the stunning fantasy and futurist artwork of **Winsor McCay** is featured in a generous portfolio. . . **Jim Ivey** brings back the Golden Age of Sunday pages as he resurrects the classic "top strips" over major comics. . . **Allen**

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Saunders provides a capsule history of the comics. . . *Sam's Strip* is a capsule history of the comics.

19. A vintage *Kerry Drake* crime tale by **Andriola** is reprinted in full. . . Penman of the Past features **Russell Patterson**, the suave cartoonist and illustrator of pretty girls. . . **Rick Marschall** recalls the editorial-cartooning days of **Frank** *(Gasoline Alley)* **King**, when Uncle Sam was fat and lazy. . . A complete sequence of *Big Chief Wahoo*, from 1937-38, involves Hollywood hi-jinx. . . **Allen Saunders's** autobiography concludes, with a tribute by **Milton Caniff**.

20. On the cover, a vintage shoot-'em-up illustration by **Alex Raymond** of *Secret Agent X-9*—culled from this issue's consideration of the expansive comic-strip ads and promotions of years past, recalled by **Jim Ivey**. . . A complete episode of **R.B. Fuller's** *Oaky Doads* illustrates that classic strip's adventure and silliness from the Golden Age. . . **Rick Marschall** resurrects one othe most bizarre strips of all time, **Gustave Verbeek's** *Terrors of the Tiny Tads*, in a portfolio of Sundays. . . Bizarre in its own way, *Sam's Strip continues.*

21. *King Aroo* was in a class with **Krazy Kat** and **Barnaby**, and this issue's color drawing by **Jack Kent** introduces a full five-month sequence of the inspired humor strip classic. . . **Harold Gray** drew adventure strips set in the Wild West, although his cousin **Leffingwell** signed them; a full Sunday sequence, violent and surprising, of *Little Joe* in this number. . . **Percy Crosby's** slum kids were at once funny and pathetic, as a generous portfolio of full-page comic paintings shows. . . A reminiscence of life as a bullpen office-boy by one who rubbed elbows with **George Herriman** and **Winsor McCay**.

22. A full-color painting by **John Held, Jr.** satirizes comic-strip cliches and introduces a portfolio of his flapper-era Sunday strip, *Merely Margie*. . . A new **NEMO** series begins: Focus On a Founding Father, with a full consideration of **Jimmy Swinnerton**. . . **Donald Phelps** offers two essays on **Swinnerton's** essence and elan. . . **Bill Blackbeard** uses a **Swinnerton** biography as a take-off for a consideration of larger aspects of the cartoonist's career. . . A full portfolio offers paintings, cartoons, strips, and Sundays by Swin. . . **Rick Marschall** again goes back 100 years and reports on how cartoonists viewed—and shaped—the debate over bloody labor violence in America. . . A full episode of *Joe Palooka* is reprinted, from 1933. . . Letters from **Jules Feiffer**, **Bill Overgard**, **Milt Caniff**.

23. The return of **Little Orphan Annie**—and a kickoff to a massive *NEMO Bookshelf* reprint series———The "Mr. Am" episode of 1937 is reprinted in full, dailies and Sundays. Leapin' Lizards! . . . **Brian Walker** previews a new book with an inside look at *Hi and Lois*'s family history, and a generous family album of favorite strips and Sundays by **Mort Walker** and **Dik Browne**. . . **Arthur Clark**, onetime assistant to **Fontaine Fox**, with many readers for a ride on comics' legendary *Toonerville Trolley*, with many illustrations and rare drawings. . . *Sam's Strip:* He jest keep rollin' along.

24. A special focus on cartooning legend **Rube Goldberg**: Two first-person articles by Rube; a portfolio of his crazy inventions; a full sequence of a goofy *Boob McNutt* adventure; a checklist of his copious life's work; and an exhaustive biography by **Jim Ivey**. . . Also a portfolio assembled by **Rick Marschall** of *Twelve Angry Men*, a first-time portfolio of legendary radical cartoonists from the early 20th century. . . A "guest editorial" by **Frank King**, pre-*Gasoline Alley*, offers cartooning tips for sure-fire success.

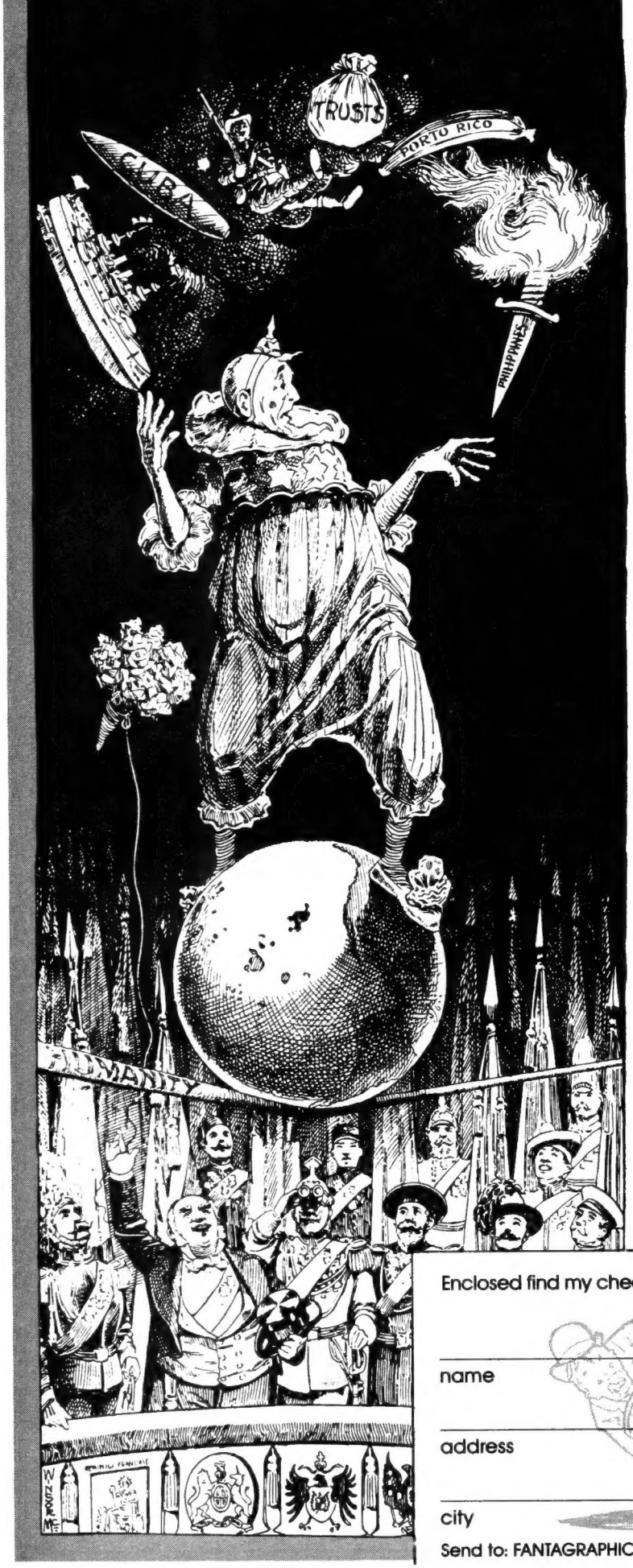
25. An important interview with cartooning legend **Edwina** is this issue's cover feature. She talks about 70 years in the cartooning buisness, her friends and her memories. With many photographs, sketches, and strips, as well as a complete 1930s sequence of her classic feature *Cap Stubbs and Tippie*. . . A fascinating facet of **Milton Caniff's** career is highlited with a portfolio of his (and **Noel Sickles's**) beautiful but frothy comic-strip ads from the 1930s. . . A new department, "Eyewitness to Comics History," presents the first-person recollections of syndicate pioneer **John Wheeler**, with hilarious anecdotes about **Bud Fisher**, **Tad**, and **DeBeck**. . . The surrealistic master **Gene Ahern** is examined by **Mark Johnson** on a visit to the Squirrel Cage.

26. *NEMO*'s first wrap-around cover features a luscious reproduction of one of **T.S. Sullivant's** memorable animal parades, and his comic menagerie is the focus of a generous portfolio in this issue; the astounding cartoons are introduced by animator **Nancy Beiman**. . . The once-ubiquitous cartooning contests of yesteryear are recalled. . . **Jay Rath** profiles strong, silent types in an article about *Henry* and cartoonist **Carl Anderson**, with many vintage examples. . . **Mark Johnson** introduces rare examples of comics' original curmudgeon, *Everett True*, and a biography of creator **A.N. Condo**.

27. **Norman Rockwell**. . . cartoonist? This issue's cover and main article unearths rare, early humor-magazine covers by the young Rockwell, along with history, biography, and commentary by **Rick Marschall**. . . This issue also opens *NEMO*'s campaign to petition the Pulitzer Prize Committee to add comic strips as a category for awards. . . *White Boy* is the classic Western strip more remembered than intimately known to comics fans, but this issue corrects the state of affairs with **Mike Barson's** intro and a full reprint sequence of **Garrett Price's** haunting classic. . . **Tom Inge** profiles another closet cartoonist: **William Faulkner** not only drew cartoons but used strip characters as inspirations in his fiction. . . A recollection of the primitive days of chalk-plate cartooning. . . A cartoon depiction of the hottest controversy a century ago: not a budget deficit but a budget surplus! . . . And a portfolio of probably the weirdest single cartoon series ever created, *Lovely Lilly*, in "Fantasy in the Comics."

28. Ethnicity in the comics. . . **Charles Hardy** has a history of racial attitudes and depictions in the comics. . . Jews as cartoons and Jewish cartoonists in America, by **John J. Appel**. . . And **Steven L. Jones** traces the heretofore neglected history of black artists and features. . . Followed up with a 22-page portfolio of ethnic images. . . Not to mention a collection of **Milt Gross's** *Nize Baby*. . . Rounded off with a full episode of **Jackie Ormes's** *Torchy Brown*, a black heroine fighting racism and sexism 50 years ago.

(SEE PAGE 4 OF THIS ISSUE FOR ORDERING INFORMATION)



DAYDREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

THE FANTASTIC VISIONS OF WINSOR McCAY

Just at the turn of the century, when practitione of the modern alchemy known as psychology we inventing dreams and manufacturing theories, cartoonist in America was doing his own investig tions and manufacturing—but he manufactur graphic images. *Winsor McCay* had a fascinati with dreams as compelling as those of Freud, Jun and Adler, recorded in his early magazine illustr tions, his daily comic strips, his large Sund pages, and his editorial cartoons.

Now Fantagraphics Books has gathered togeth the finest of Winsor McCay's astonishing body work (too often overlooked in the shadow of h admitted classics *Little Nemo* and *Gertie the Din saur*) in a single, 178-page, oversized trade volun

Like the Old Testament prophets, McCay exhor warns, and teaches, calling upon his gifted ima ination and powers of expression to bring o lessons to new generations. His sheer techni brilliance staggers the faculties. Every drawing meticulously rendered; windows, girders, han costumes, machines, palaces, clouds—they're *there*, and they're perfect. At once the drawings c contain the familiar and the unexpected; they c be dreamily enchanting and full of menace. McC visited worlds that previously had been visited Bosch and Blake, but few others. Winsor McCay w a tour guide familiar with both the univers boundaries and the microscopic recesses of pixilated imagination. Enjoy your trip!

Enclosed find my check/money order for $19.95 (plus $1.50 postage and handling)

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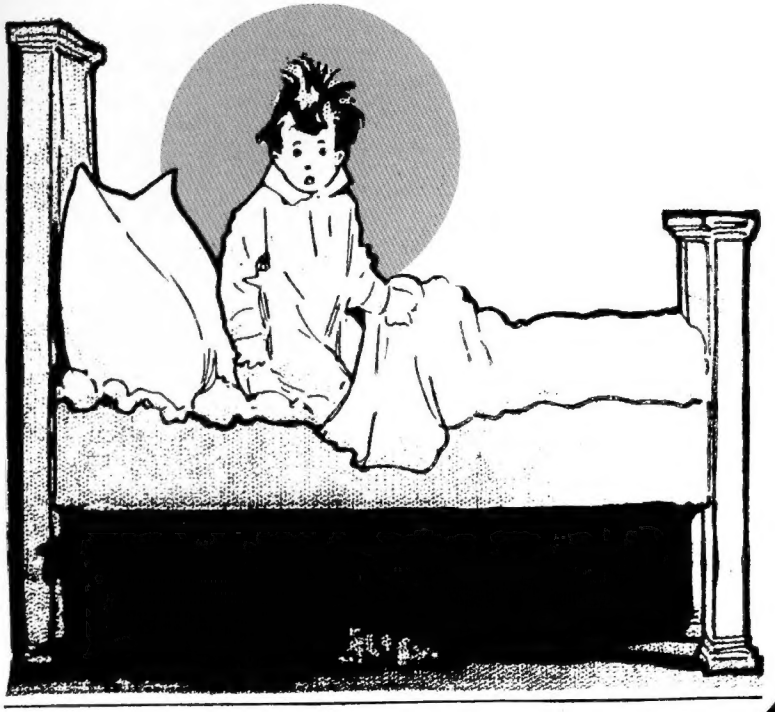
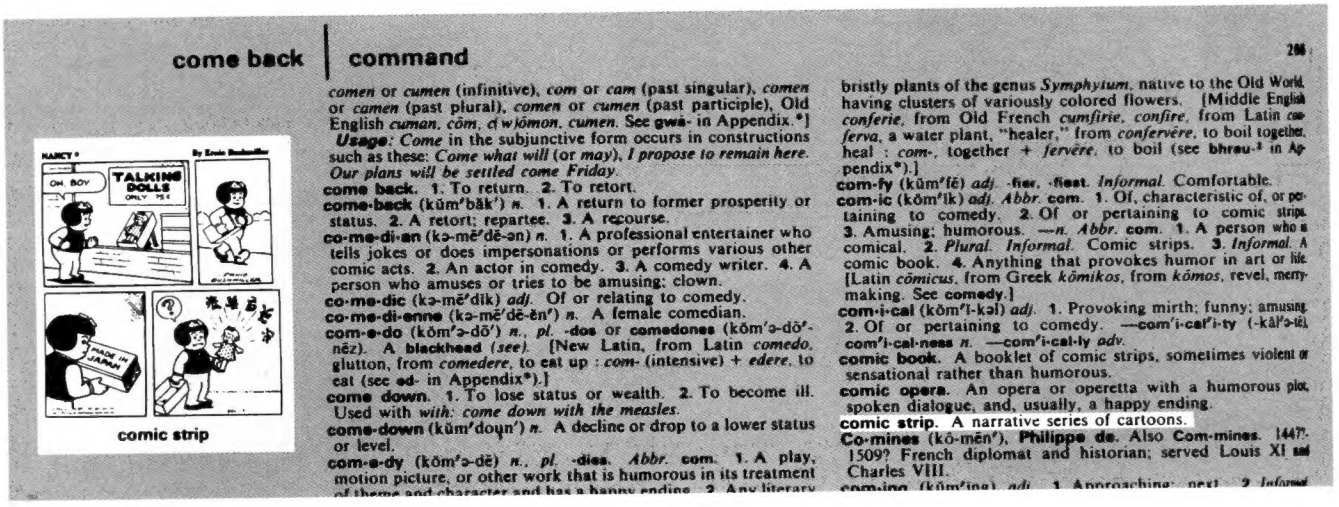
Next Issue:

Nemo in nemo!



Previewing the important new series that will reprint the entire run of *Little Nemo in Slumberland by Winsor McCay* (1905-1911), our landmark 30th issue will feature a portfolio of rare and astounding fantasy pages from this classic comic strip, with a discussion of W. McCay's contributions to comic art. Featured will be lush, full pages and isolated, enlarged morsels of McCay's great art.

ALSO!: Look in the dictionary (or at least in the *American Heritage Dictionary*) under "comic strip" and you'll see an example of *Ernie Bushmiller's Nancy*. What has made this strip so enduring and—in the eyes of many critics—so typical and essential? Brian Walker, who has recently edited a collection of *Nancy* through the years, offers some insights; and we offer strips not seen in his book.



come back | command

comic strip

comen or cumen (infinitive), com or cam (past singular), comen or cumen (past plural), comen or cumen (past participle), Old English cuman, cōm, cwōmon, cumen. See gwā- in Appendix.*]

Usage: Come in the subjunctive form occurs in constructions such as these: *Come what will* (or *may*), *I propose to remain here. Our plans will be settled come Friday.*

come back. 1. To return. 2. To retort.

come-back (kŭm′băk′) *n.* 1. A return to former prosperity or status. 2. A retort; repartee. 3. A recourse.

co·me·di·an (kə-mē′dē-ən) *n.* 1. A professional entertainer who tells jokes or does impersonations or performs various other comic acts. 2. An actor in comedy. 3. A comedy writer. 4. A person who amuses or tries to be amusing; clown.

co·me·dic (kə-mĕ′dĭk) *adj.* Of or relating to comedy.

co·me·di·enne (kə-mē′dē-ĕn′) *n.* A female comedian.

com·e·do (kŏm′ə-dō′) *n., pl.* **-dos** or **comedones** (kŏm′ə-dō′-nēz). A **blackhead** *(see)*. [New Latin, from Latin *comedo*, glutton, from *comedere*, to eat up : *com-* (intensive) + *edere*, to eat (see **ed-** in Appendix*).]

come down. 1. To lose status or wealth. 2. To become ill. Used with *with*: *come down with the measles.*

come-down (kŭm′doun′) *n.* A decline or drop to a lower status or level.

com·e·dy (kŏm′ə-dē) *n., pl.* **-dies.** *Abbr.* **com.** 1. A play, motion picture, or other work that is humorous in its treatment of theme and character and has a happy ending. 2. Any literary

bristly plants of the genus *Symphytum*, native to the Old World, having clusters of variously colored flowers. [Middle English *conferie*, from Old French *cumfirie*, *confire*, from Latin *confĕrva*, a water plant, "healer," from *confervēre*, to boil together, heal : *com-*, together + *fervēre*, to boil (see **bhreu-**³ in Appendix*).]

com·fy (kŭm′fē) *adj.* **-fier, -fiest.** *Informal.* Comfortable.

com·ic (kŏm′ĭk) *adj.* *Abbr.* **com.** 1. Of, characteristic of, or pertaining to comedy. 2. Of or pertaining to comic strips. 3. Amusing; humorous. —*n.* *Abbr.* **com.** 1. A person who is comical. 2. *Plural. Informal.* Comic strips. 3. *Informal.* A comic book. 4. Anything that provokes humor in art or life. [Latin *cōmicus*, from Greek *kōmikos*, from *kōmos*, revel, merrymaking. See **comedy.**]

com·i·cal (kŏm′ĭ-kəl) *adj.* 1. Provoking mirth; funny; amusing. 2. Of or pertaining to comedy. —**com′i-cal′i-ty** (-kăl′ə-tē), **com′i-cal-ness** *n.* —**com′i-cal-ly** *adv.*

comic book. A booklet of comic strips, sometimes violent or sensational rather than humorous.

comic opera. An opera or operetta with a humorous plot, spoken dialogue, and, usually, a happy ending.

comic strip. A narrative series of cartoons.

Co·mines (kō-mēn′), **Philippe de.** Also **Com·mines.** 1447?-1509? French diplomat and historian; served Louis XI and Charles VIII.

com·ing (kŭm′ĭng) *adj.* 1. Approaching; next. 2. *Informal.*

MORE!: One could likewise argue that under dictionary definitions of political cartooning, one could be satisfied with an example of Herblock's work. *NEMO* #30 presents an interview with the master and a portfolio of his work dating back to the 1920s—fascinating reading and vital cartoon history!

AND—A discovery of perhaps the very first daily strip, *Mr. Pee Wee* (yes, Mr. Pee Wee) from the turn of the century. . . *Sam's Strip* redux (whatever that means). . . and more.

NEMO #30—"Read My Lips: NO NEW COMICS!"